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THE NEW REPUBLIC

A Weekly Journal of Opinion

JUNE 22, 1998

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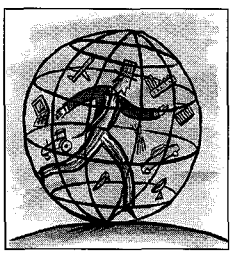

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CORRESPONDENCE

Smoked out

To the editors:
Good for Jonathan Chait ("The Great Liberal Smokeout," May 18) for reminding liberals like me of the unsightliness of a good liberal (or, worse, hordes of them) on a mission.

As outraged as many of us were about conservative efforts to impose lifestyle decisions—through punitive, economic means—on poor people during the welfare reform debate, how is it that so many liberals can rally behind a $1.50-per-pack sin tax—a strategy which by definition targets the poor—as a means of deterring bad social behavior?

BILL ZAVARELLO
Washington, D.C.

To the editors:
Jonathan Chait correctly points out that cigarette taxes fall disproportionately on poor smokers. But, when those smokers develop smoking-related diseases such as cancer, heart disease, strokes, and emphysema, the high cost of treating them falls disproportionately upon tax-financed health care programs such as Medicaid and Medicare. Cigarette tax revenues should be earmarked to cover these costs. Even if the higher costs do not deter poor smokers, at least they will bear the cost of their lifestyle choice, financially as well as physically.

GERALD S. GLAZER
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Jonathan Chait replies:
Numerous studies have shown smokers impose little or no net cost to society. Since they die younger, their forgone pensions cancel out additional medical costs and lost productivity.

IRA ire

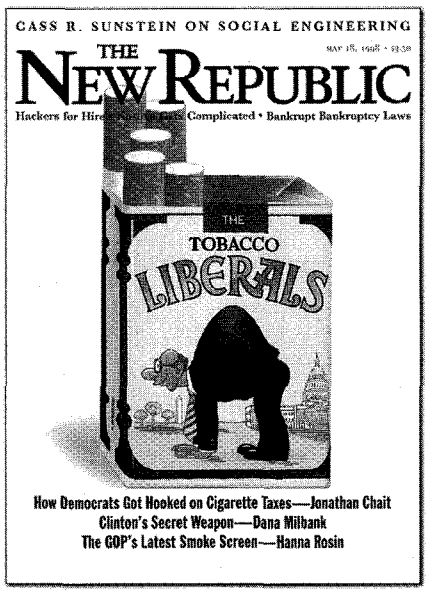
To the editors:
Charles Lane ("Wrong Roth," May 18) argues against giving "people a tax break for engaging in economic behavior they would have found rational anyway." But history is replete with instances where people engage in nonrational, destructive behavior. Coincidentally, in the same issue as Lane's article, Hanna Rosin writes ("The Fat Tax") that students ate more carrots when a subsidy lowered the price by 50 percent. If a subsidy can influence behavior, so can a tax break.

MELISSA BELL
New York, New York

To the editors:
Charles Lane claims, "thanks to the Roth IRA, the government will have to raid the private economy for another $20 billion over the next decade." If anything, the creation of the Roth IRA means billions more for the U.S. Treasury. This is because people who want to convert their traditional IRAs to Roth IRAs will have to pay taxes on the amount converted. To cover the $20 billion Mr. Lane is worried about losing, we would only need to see conversions of slightly more than five percent of $1.3 trillion currently tied up in traditional IRAs.

DON MILNE
Bountiful, Utah

Charles Lane replies:
Joint Committee on Taxation data confirm that the new IRA rules will impose a



net revenue loss of just over $20 billion between 1997 and 2007.

Kinder cutting

To the editors:
Your Notebook item "A Kinder Cut" (May 11) contained a minor omission. Capital gains within the 15 percent tax bracket that would have been taxed at 20 percent are taxed at ten percent, not at 15 or 20 percent.

JOHN MORRISON
Houston, Texas

Fat chance

To the editors:
Hanna Rosin ("The Fat Tax," May 18) argues that a junk food tax isn't such a crazy idea—after all, it could help reduce the morbidity and mortality associated with bad eating habits. But the objection to a junk food tax is not that it wouldn't work but that the government has no business trying to manipulate our diets.

JACOB SULLUM
New York, New York

Family matters

To the editors:
Controversy over the impact of one-parent families on the economic status of African Americans has reemerged, thanks to TNR. Glenn C. Loury ("Unequalized," April 6) cites the 1998 *Economic Report of the President* (prepared by the Council of Economic Advisers) as indicating a small role for family structure. In response, Abigail and Stephan Thernstrom (Correspondence, May 18) connect black poverty to family structure and refer to my 1996 *Economica* article, which attributed all of the rise in the shares of black and white children living in poverty to declining marriage rates.

How is it that social scientists have not resolved this sensitive issue decades after the rancorous battles of the late 1960s and 1970s set off by the 1965 Moynihan Report issued by the Labor Department? Ferreting out the impact of family structure on black incomes seems straightforward enough. Simply compare today's black incomes with what black incomes would be if family structure were the same as some alternative benchmark—say, the family structure of blacks in the past or of whites today. For example, suppose black husband-wife families averaged $40,000 in income, that black one-parent families averaged $20,000, and that shares of one-parent families were 25 percent among whites and 60 percent among blacks. Then, if blacks were in husband-wife and one-parent families in the same proportions as whites, while black incomes within each family category did not change, average black incomes would equal $35,000—or $7,000 more than the $28,000 actual average.

Had the CEA used this approach, and calculated 1996 black-white income differences assuming blacks had the same family structure as whites, they would have projected black median incomes at over 80 percent of white incomes, far above the actual 60 percent figure. The child poverty differences are at least as dramatic. The 1996 black rates were 34 percent, compared to 13 percent among whites; once we project on the basis of white proportions of husband-wife and one-parent families, the black rate falls to 20 percent.

Oddly, the CEA chose a procedure that assured a smaller impact. Instead of projecting 1996 income differences based on a common 1996 family structure, they

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considered the impact only of race differences in the change in family structure, ignoring the effects of large family structure differences in 1967, their base period. This decision makes a big difference. While the CEA report's family structure changes explain only 20 percent of the racial gaps in income and poverty, the entire race difference in family structure accounts for 50 percent or more.

Even when applied to the appropriate numbers, this method may overstate the role of family structure. Why? Since unmarried men earn less than married men, marrying them off to unmarried mothers would leave the incomes of newly married couples lower than those of existing married couples. While marriage itself tends to raise men's earnings, much of the lower earnings of unmarried men reflect their lower earnings capacity. My *Economica* article took account of these effects. I looked at how changes in family structure affected changes in child poverty and income inequality among children and found that, between 1971 and 1989, the proportion of children living in the husband-wife families fell from 91 percent to 83 percent among whites and from about 61 percent to 40 percent among blacks. Had the marriage rates of mothers remained at 1971 levels, poverty rates among black children would have declined from 41 percent in 1971 to about 30 percent in 1989, instead of rising to 43 percent. Nearly one-third of poor black children would have escaped poverty. For white children, poverty would have fallen from the observed twelve percent to ten percent. Thus, changes in marriage rates prevented the racial gap from narrowing sharply.

No single estimate can capture the complex social dynamics embedded in marriage, childbearing, and work decisions. But, until more elaborate approaches yield more definitive results, we should not imagine that family structure accounts for only a modest share of racial differences in income. Instead, we should expand efforts to slow the flow into unmarried motherhood (my favorite way is through school-to-career programs for young people), to eliminate financial disincentives to marry, and to reconnect unmarried fathers with their children.

ROBERT I. LERMAN
Economist, Urban Institute and American University
Washington, D.C.

Murray replies

To the editors:

Glenn C. Loury's article about income inequality and IQ ("Charles II," May 18) has just come to my attention. Readers curious about Loury's technical allegations may evaluate them against the monograph's text, available from the American Enterprise Institute. A few quick clarifications of fact about his personal allegations:

Regarding my familiarity with regression analysis: The way the division of labor worked out, I was responsible for the design and conduct of the regression analyses in *The Bell Curve* and drafted the corresponding technical appendixes. Richard Herrnstein's editing of my technical exposition was cosmetic, as was my editing of his.

Regarding my willingness to debate: My dozens of university appearances after *The Bell Curve*—I can recall only three exceptions—were structured as debates with scholarly specialists, often two or three of them at a time from different disciplines, selected by the sponsoring institution. At the Kennedy School debate that Loury portrays as a soft touch, my nameless "nonspecialist" adversary was Stephen Jay Gould.

CHARLES MURRAY
Burkittsville, Maryland

Glenn C. Loury replies:

I stand by my account. Stephen Jay Gould is a great man, but he is no social scientist. Murray ducked the more threatening encounter with James Heckman at the University of Chicago. One has only to read Heckman's devastating review of *The Bell Curve,* in the *Journal of Political Economy* (October 1995), to understand why.

Unconquered coalition

To the editors:

Your Notebook item ("Conquered Coalition," May 18) got it wrong about both the Concord Coalition and Social Security.

A cool-headed reading of the new Social Security trustees' report shows that the program's long-term cash deficit significantly worsened since last year's report. Take 2030, when the baby-boom generation all will have retired. Last year, the trustees forecast that the shortfall in 2030 between the program's tax income and benefits would be $213 billion in inflation-adjusted dollars. In their latest report, the trustees point to a ten percent increase in the 2030 shortfall, which is now projected to reach $233 billion. Covering a deficit this large would require a 38 percent increase in FICA taxes dedicated to Social Security.

So, if the future looks worse this year than before, why do the trustees report that the trust fund can go three more years before "bankruptcy"? Because more

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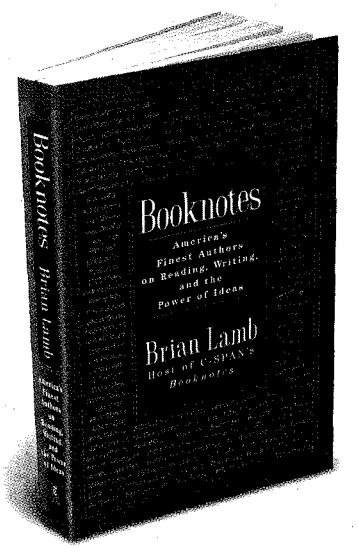

Which author was interviewed in the White House barber shop for a presidential staff position?
See page 240

Which acclaimed historian frequently writes in the nude?
See page 11

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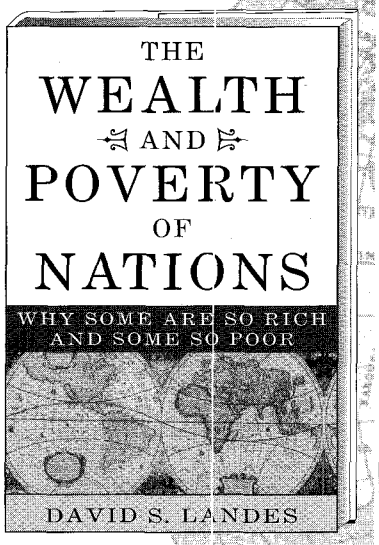

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The New Republic

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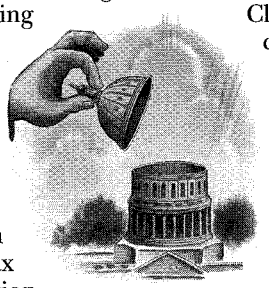
FROM WASHINGTON

Dangerous liaison

In April, as reports of the budget surplus came in, Newt Gingrich told *The New York Times*: "You can't have that kind of money sitting in Washington without the liberals spending it." One might presume, based on that quote, that Gingrich is hell-bent on preserving the budget surplus from the prying hands of spendthrift Democrats. But this is actually just Newt's coy way of saying he wants to spend the surplus himself. Already, the Potomac air is thick with sundry Republican proposals for the surplus: tax cuts, highways, debt reduction, personal retirement accounts, or some combination of the above in various fractions. One-third of the money each for debt reduction, spending, and tax cuts, says Representative Mark Neumann. One-half for tax cuts, says Gingrich. All of it for tax cuts, says Jack Kemp. "As much of both [tax cuts and deficit reduction] as I could," says Dick Armey.



President Clinton has taken in this debate with the same studious detachment C-SPAN's *Washington Journal* host Brian Lamb uses when callers from Oklahoma begin ranting about their prescription medication. Clinton's only official position is that we should not make any decisions about the surplus "until we have strengthened Social Security for the twenty-first century." Democrats in Congress have all bought into this line.

Of course, when Clinton first issued this promise during his State of the Union address, the budget surplus was expected to reach just a few measly billion dollars over the next couple of years—a trickle of black ink that would grow into a mighty river starting early in the next century. Clinton's promise to delay spending it, then, took about as much restraint as a dieter forgoing the maraschino cherry on a banana split. All he and Newt had to do was wait out the next congressional elections, pass a Social Security reform that shored up the system's finances, and the surplus mother lode would be theirs for the squandering.

But then, as if to punish Clinton, fate intervened via its Washington incarnation, the Congressional Budget Office. A dizzying succession of recalculations showed the budget surplus growing faster than anybody had previously anticipated. At this point it is expected to reach close to $100 billion this year, which is real money. The promise not to tap the surplus has suddenly become a significant restraint—one that will require resolve to keep.

And so, naturally, Clinton has begun to back down, if ever so slightly. His promise to delay using the surplus, the president explained a week ago, "does not mean that in the future there could never be a tax cut." This innocuous-sounding statement was in fact a sort of pheromone sent out toward the Republicans, signaling Clinton's availability for a political coupling. The House Ways and Means Committee wasted no time reciprocating. "The president is opening doors," a staffer told *The Wall Street Journal.*

Clinton's backpedaling actually began months earlier. Originally, administration officials had considered a very specific plan for the budget surplus—transferring all future surpluses directly into the Social Security trust fund. But, before officially unveiling the proposal at the State of the Union, Clinton trimmed his vision and promised merely to hold off on using the surplus until Social Security was fixed—in effect, setting the stage for the mating dance we are now witnessing.

One unfortunate consequence of this episode is that the notion of using the surplus to bolster the trust fund has garnered very little attention—so little, in fact, that few people even understand how it would work. But it's still a good idea, and, if Clinton doesn't want to expound upon its virtues, then I will.

It has two parts. First, the federal government would use any surplus tax revenues to buy back U.S. Treasury bonds from the public. This would allow those bondholders to invest their money instead in the private sector. Increasing the supply of private capital would reduce interest rates—the more money there is to lend, the easier it is to borrow—and boost corporate productivity by freeing up more money for businesses to invest. Reducing the national debt would also lessen interest payments on the debt, which currently gobble up 15 percent of the federal budget.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

JUNE 22, 1998

THE FIRE SPREADS

If the manufacture of nuclear weapons by India and Pakistan is a curse, then the testing of nuclear weapons by India and Pakistan is a blessing. Yes, a blessing. For at last there has occurred an event that exposes the reality, and the insanity, of nuclear proliferation. The subcontinent has recklessly concentrated the mind.

Of course, the "international community" knew that these states had these weapons: it knew, and made pious professions of its deep concern, and threw up its hands, and watched (and in some cases collaborated in) the frantic chase after them. From the standpoint of strategy, moreover, nothing much has changed in the wake of the subcontinent's fortnight of mega-saber-rattling, except that now each of these states has five fewer of the obscene devices in its arsenal. (Pakistan's sixth test appears to have been more of a whimper than a bang.) But the standpoint of strategy is never the only standpoint that is required for the understanding of this problem. Nuclear weapons are the military instruments of political designs. They are acquired for political purposes; they are tested for political purposes; they are deployed for political purposes; and they are used for political purposes.

It is the political reality of nuclear proliferation to which we have been rudely awakened. For this reason, we must beware of a revival of the old illusion about arms races, which is that they are the cause of wars. We detected a whiff of such an analysis in President Clinton's remark about the arms race between India and Pakistan: "I cannot believe that we are about to start the twenty-first century by having the Indian subcontinent repeat the worst mistakes of the twentieth century." Never mind that nuclear weapons were not the worst mistake of the twentieth century, and never mind that the president's millennialism has become a form of thoughtlessness. The important point is that wars are not caused by arms races. Wars are caused by political and military authorities who are driven by symbols and appetites and ideas and fears. It is not just the weaponry in the subcontinent that is so frightening. It is also the political culture on the subcontinent that has promoted nuclear weapons into sacred emblems of sovereignty and preferred military development to social development. It was not a coincidence that the Indian provocation was the work of its new Hindu chauvinist government, and the Prime Minister of Pakistan instructed, "Today we have made history. Today God has given us the opportunity to take critical steps for the country's defense."

Consider Pakistan's tests. In the wake of India's tests, Pakistan was presented with its most brilliant diplomatic opening in many years. By not responding in kind, by restraining itself as President Clinton and many other leaders beseeched it to restrain itself, Pakistan could have improved its position immeasurably. The United States would have released the F-16 fighter jets that have been embargoed since 1990; and foreign aid would have flowed; and India would have been isolated and deplored in the opinion of the world. But there was a problem. It was that the crowds in the streets were demanding a demonstration of Pakistan's extreme might. It was politically impossible for Pakistan's leaders *not* to test.

Or consider the language in which India and Pakistan have enveloped their newest missiles. The Indians call theirs the *Prithvi,* and the Pakistanis call theirs the *Ghauri.* (The *Prithvi* owes its existence to Russian technology, and the *Ghauri* owes its existence to North Korean technology. So much for sovereignty!) A Pakistani spokesman explained that "it is also a historical fact that *Ghauri* defeated *Prithvi,*" referring to the defeat of a Hindu ruler by a Muslim emperor in the twelfth century.

It is the collision of the twelfth century with the twentieth century that is so dispiriting. For a regime of deterrence, if such a regime may be established on the subcontinent, must be premised on the insulation of nuclear arsenals from such atavisms. Moral and strategic cool must prevail over political and historical heat. For it is not the prospect of national greatness that

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nuclear weapons present, but the prospect of national destruction. If the United States is to have a new policy in the wake of the blasts, it should be a policy that attempts to implant the attitudes and technology that India and Pakistan need to maintain deterrence in a geopolitical environment far more unstable than the intercontinental standoff that once obtained between the U.S. and the Soviet Union.

The underground explosions on the subcontinent also flushed out another reality from which Washington has wished to look away, and that is the incoherence of American policy. In a world awash in nuclear materials and nuclear experts, sanctions against particular states do not constitute a serious response to proliferation. India tested not least as an expression of its alarm about the military aggrandizement of China, to which the United States continues to turn a blind eye. And the role of Russia in spreading this fire is a scandal of long standing, but Russia, too, is still our "partner." So, tests or no tests, millennium or no millennium, it is business as usual. •

TONGUE TWISTER

Let us begin with what's regrettable about the victory of Proposition 227, the ballot initiative that will effectively end bilingual education in California public schools. As a general rule, statewide referenda are not the best means for making nuanced decisions about pedagogical policy. Once again, initiative-happy California voters have tied the hands of their policymakers, this time in a way that may also curtail the freedom of local school districts to respond flexibly to the challenges of teaching children with limited English skills. Among the options they might need is carefully designed bilingual education, which, in certain circumstances, may be the best way to involve some immigrant parents in the education of their kids or to meet the needs of a sudden influx of refugees. Under the new initiative, however, children with limited English will get no more than one year of what is called "sheltered English" instruction—in which they are taught mostly in English but the pace is gentler and the language used is simpler. Though the "sheltered English" method is untested as a means of moving large numbers of kids into mainstream classes, it is now the law.

Still, it might never have come to this if not for the intransigence of bilingual education's supporters. Proposition 227, for all its flaws, was provoked by the fact that, in recent years, bilingual education had acquired one of those halos of political virtue that made criticizing it—much less reforming it—a taboo for elected officials. "Since the seventies," writes Gregory Rodriguez, a research fellow at the Pepperdine Institute for Public Policy and an acute observer of Latino politics in California, "a mixture of blind faith and administrative arrogance had not only kept bilingual education afloat but made it unassailable." More and more, Rodriguez argues, the program was debated "in cultural rather than pedagogical terms."

For opponents, the idea that children of immigrants should receive up to several years of instruction in their native language, delaying their "mainstreaming" into English classes, was a blow to the American tradition of assimilation. For supporters, meanwhile, bilingual ed had become not so much a way of improving the educational prospects of children as a way of instilling a brand of ethnic pride that bordered on nationalism. As Rodriguez puts it: "Lost in this racialized hubbub was the only question that should have mattered: Is bilingual education helping or hurting limited-English speakers in U.S. public schools?"

And, while both sides in the debate sometimes assumed that most Latinos themselves wanted bilingual education as much as their ostensible leaders did, this assumption was unfounded. Though Prop 227 was written by Ron Unz, a Republican multimillionaire from Silicon Valley, he took his inspiration from a group of Mexican-American parents, most of them garment workers in downtown Los Angeles, who had decided that bilingual teaching was holding their children back and were engineering a boycott of it. "Parents do not want their children working in sweatshops or cleaning downtown office buildings when they grow up," Alice Callaghan, an Episcopal priest and community organizer who worked with the parents, told *The Boston Globe*. "They want them to get into Harvard and Stanford, and that won't happen unless they are truly fluent and literate in English." Polls taken before Tuesday's election indicated that anywhere between 30 and 60 percent of Latino voters in California approved of the measure. This was not the son of Proposition 187; Latino voters did not see it as another round of immigrant-bashing.

And they were right not to. After decades of research, there is no good evidence that bilingual education has been successful in meeting its original goal: helping students with limited English to master the language and to make it through school. In part, this is a function of inadequate research. Many of the relevant studies have simply been too tendentious in spirit and methodology to yield reliable results. A report released last year by the National Research Council concluded that most evaluations of bilingual education were not reliable. But, in part, it's because, at the broadest level, the results of the bilingual experiment have not been encouraging. Bilingual ed has done nothing to reverse the strikingly high dropout rate among Hispanics (17.9 percent for those born in the U.S. and 46.2 percent for immigrants compared to 12.2 percent for blacks and 8.6 percent for whites). Hispanic students in bilingual programs are no less likely to drop out than are those in English-only programs.

Moreover, although bilingual instruction may work

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for students who have just arrived in the U.S. with some experience of good schooling in their native countries, it doesn't seem to work at all for students who haven't had decent schooling. Nor does it seem to work for those who were born in the U.S. to parents who speak Spanish at home. As Charles L. Glenn, a professor of education policy at Boston University, told *The New York Times*: "Someone who plays soccer will learn to play American football faster than someone who has never played a sport. But that does not make it more efficient to teach soccer first if the goal is football. We should build on academic skills if a child already has them in another language, but we should not make developing new ones in that language a priority." And, at least one well-designed recent study has confirmed what many Latino parents have apparently begun to suspect—that bilingual schooling can actually impede social mobility. Two Mexican-American economists, Mark Lopez of the University of Maryland and Marie Mora of New Mexico State University, found that first- and second-generation Latinos who went through bilingual ed earned significantly less in the job market than otherwise similar peers who got their instruction in English only.

It's time for a fundamental rethinking of bilingual education. With any luck, parents, teachers, and local legislators in other states will learn from California's experience and radically reform the program before somebody circulates a ballot initiative that takes the decision out of their hands altogether. •

NOTEBOOK

MIXED MESSAGE: On the issue of money in politics, there is no clear moral to the story of California's Democratic gubernatorial primary. You can take Lieutenant Governor Gray Davis's victory as proof that money can't, after all, buy everything in politics. A spending limit in this race wouldn't have mattered, since both Al Checchi—the corporate mogul who spent $40 million of his own money—and Representative Jane Harman—who spent $15 million—wildly outspent the eventual winner. But this race doesn't really show that money is irrelevant either. The mere prospect that Checchi and Harman would run was enough to scare off two worthy contenders—Senator Dianne Feinstein and former Representative Leon Panetta—thus proving that money can skew the process even if it doesn't determine the outcome.

THE ROTH FILES, CONTINUED: We don't mean to keep picking on Republican Senator William Roth of Delaware in this space. Well, actually, we do—because Senator Roth keeps proposing tax cuts that conspicuously confer breaks on people who don't really need them. One of the senator's latest schemes, a tax deduction for health insurance, is a case in point. The idea of allowing taxpayers to deduct health insurance premiums has, of course, been around for some time. But Roth's proposal has gained new currency in recent weeks as the GOP has struggled to fend off a patient bill of rights that would establish minimum standards for managed care while allowing consumers to sue insurance companies over unnecessary denials of treatment. This is a curious juxtaposition: After all, helping more people get insurance really has very little to do with making insurance better for those people who already have it. The real problem with Roth's proposal, though, is that it won't do what it's supposed to do—namely, help people get insurance. As a new report from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities points out, a high proportion of Americans who lack health insurance are so poor that they don't have to pay income taxes at all—thus, income tax deductions mean nothing to them. (According to the Employee Benefit Research Institute, 64 percent of uninsured Americans live in families with annual incomes below $30,000.) So who would benefit from the Roth plan? According to the center's report, the main beneficiaries would be high-income families—many of whom can afford to buy their own insurance coverage anyway. Now, if the tax cut were in the form of a refundable credit, all Americans, even those too poor to pay taxes, could take advantage. But Roth hasn't endorsed *that* idea.

THIS JUST IN:

Children shooting children a bad sign

—The Baltimore *Sun*, May 27.

THE HARD QUESTIONS

DIVERSITY DILEMMA

By Nathan Glazer

"Diversity" is the objective that higher education officials cite when they defend policies of affirmative action and racial preference. But it is really the representation of the underrepresented that most concerns them. There is, after all, no suitable measure for diversity and no reason to think that a student body that is three percent African American falls below some acceptable standard of "diversity" while one that is six percent black does not. The real issue is that six percent is closer than three

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percent to the twelve percent African American share of the population.

Besides, "diversity" is an easy target to puncture: The departments in the social sciences and the humanities at elite colleges and universities are generally something like 90 percent Democratic and 95 percent liberal, as the pesky conservative student newspapers like to point out. This seems a rather devastating comment on their ideological diversity, but that does not seem to bother many in academia.

And yet, if the real objective is not diversity but eliminating underrepresentation, then another issue lurks just beneath the surface: overrepresentation. And it is obvious what this means. The "overrepresented" are the Asian Americans. That term covers many groups—Chinese, South Asians, Koreans—sharing no common characteristics other than origin on the same continent and a remarkably high commitment to education for their children. The accidents of bureaucratic decision-making 30 years ago cast all Asian Americans into one group and into the same general category as African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and American Indians ("Native Americans"), all presumed to be victims of discrimination and thus needful of the special attention known as affirmative action.

This special attention included requiring employers and institutions to report on how many members of each of the specially protected groups were employed or admitted. The original point of affirmative action was to deal with the problems of black Americans—they were the ones furthest behind; their historical plight was the reason Congress passed a Civil Rights Act and created an Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. But bureaucracies need general rules. If there were to be head counts of blacks, why not other nonwhites, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, American Indians? John Skrentny dates the beginning of the affirmative action epoch to March 1966, when the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission sent out for the first time its EEO-1 form, requiring these statistics from employers. About the same time, colleges and universities were required to submit the same statistics about students.

It is, of course, an earlier "overrepresentation" problem that preoccupies some critics of affirmative action, and that is the overrepresentation of Jews in elite academic institutions that became apparent in the 1920s and led to Jewish quotas. The quotas persisted, to one degree or another, through the 1950s. But there are three striking contrasts with this earlier experience. There were then no required governmental counts of how many students were Jews, although the colleges and universities worked very hard to compile such statistics for their own use. There was no census count of Jews either—religion has never been a category in the U.S. census—and thus there was no basis on which overrepresentation could be decisively measured. And, third, Jews were then much less militant than they or other minority groups are today in responding to discrimination. Against the background of their experience in Czarist Russia or Hitler's Germany, American Jews in the early twentieth century were not doing so badly, and most thought it best to keep quiet. Both the colleges and Jewish organizations preferred to work outside the glare of publicity that official statistics would heighten.

No such luck for Asian Americans today, when all these matters are in the open. It is common knowledge that Asian Americans, one-tenth of the population in California in the 1990 census, make up almost half of the entering classes of the state's elite public universities. The "underrepresented" today in California include not only African Americans and Mexican-Americans but that amorphous category, whites. What is one to make of this? The critics of the regime of racial preference make two points: Note, they say, that African Americans and Mexican-Americans can make it—if they just try as hard as the Asian Americans do. Also note, they add in their more disingenuous moments, that the percentage of "minorities" admitted has not really dropped, if one uses the bureaucratic definition of minority.

No one today wants to make much of this remarkable disparity. Asian Americans are satisfied with it. African Americans and Mexican-Americans do not want to break up the hoped-for rainbow alliance. And, indeed, Asian American students will generally demonstrate alongside the underrepresented for affirmative action, and their organizations and newspapers will generally support it, a remarkable example of ideology overcoming self-interest. "Whites" simply seem dumbstruck by the relatively mediocre performance of their children vis-à-vis Asian Americans.

It is hard to believe this can continue; at some point the matter is bound to come up. Asians were three percent of the population in 1990, will probably be four percent in 2000, and will rise steadily if present patterns of immigration continue. Even a small group with a special commitment to education can make an enormous impact on colleges and universities: Jews were less than four percent of the American population in the 1920s (they are now more like two percent) when the "Jewish problem" greatly agitated our colleges. They nevertheless could have taken up, barring quotas, one-fifth or one-quarter of the enrollment of these institutions. This was at a time when many fewer Americans went to college, and colleges were not yet mass institutions. But, even today, when half or more of all high school graduates go on to post-secondary education, Asian Americans can make a great impact on enrollment because they favor the most selective institutions, and in them they typically make up one-fifth or more of the students. In the future, they will reach a higher proportion.

Until now, underrepresentation has been an issue about minorities. But how will we talk about the problem of the "underrepresented" when they form a politically dominant majority? That will be a real test for a mature and multiethnic democracy; it is not too early to begin thinking about it. •

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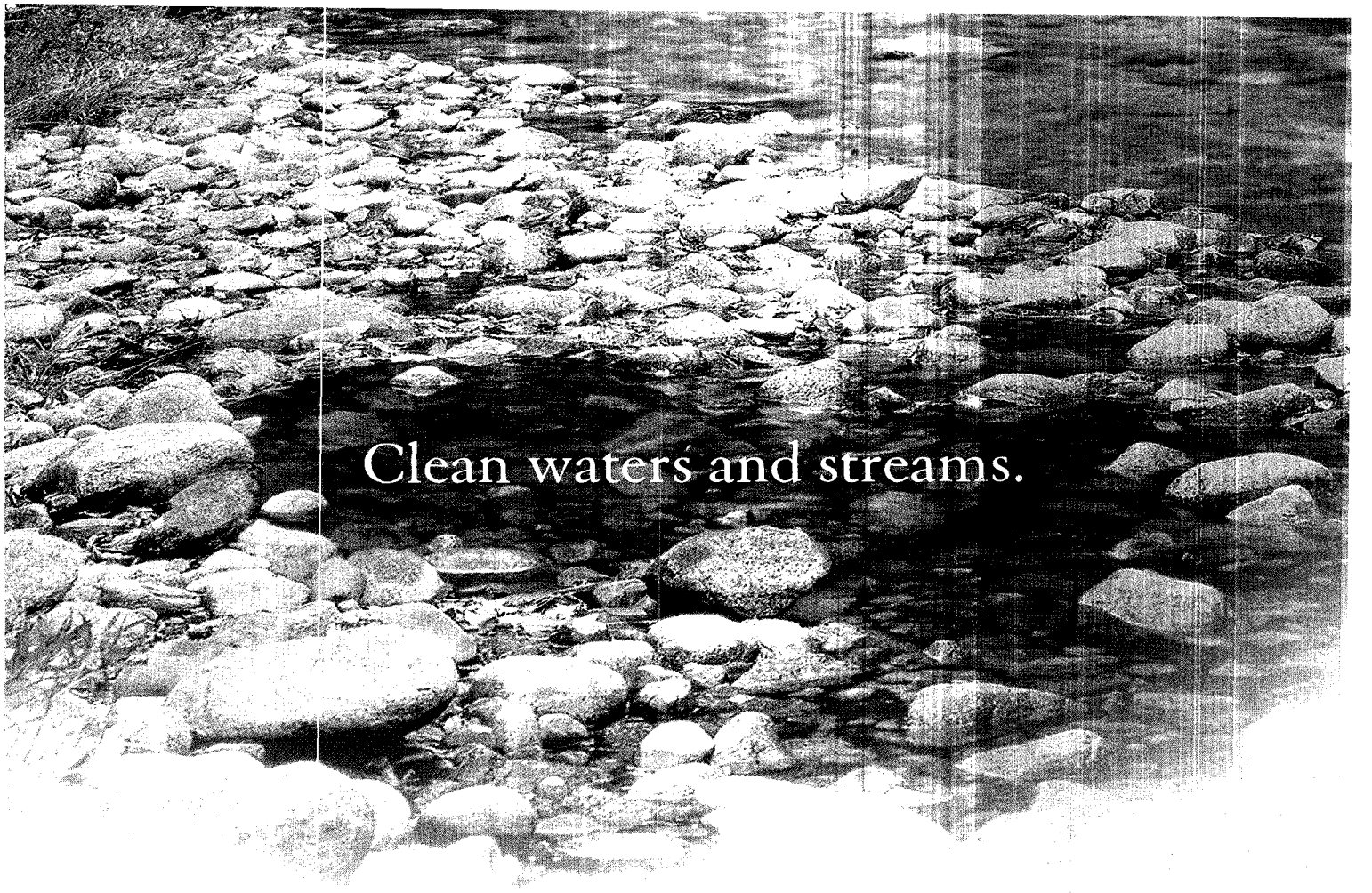

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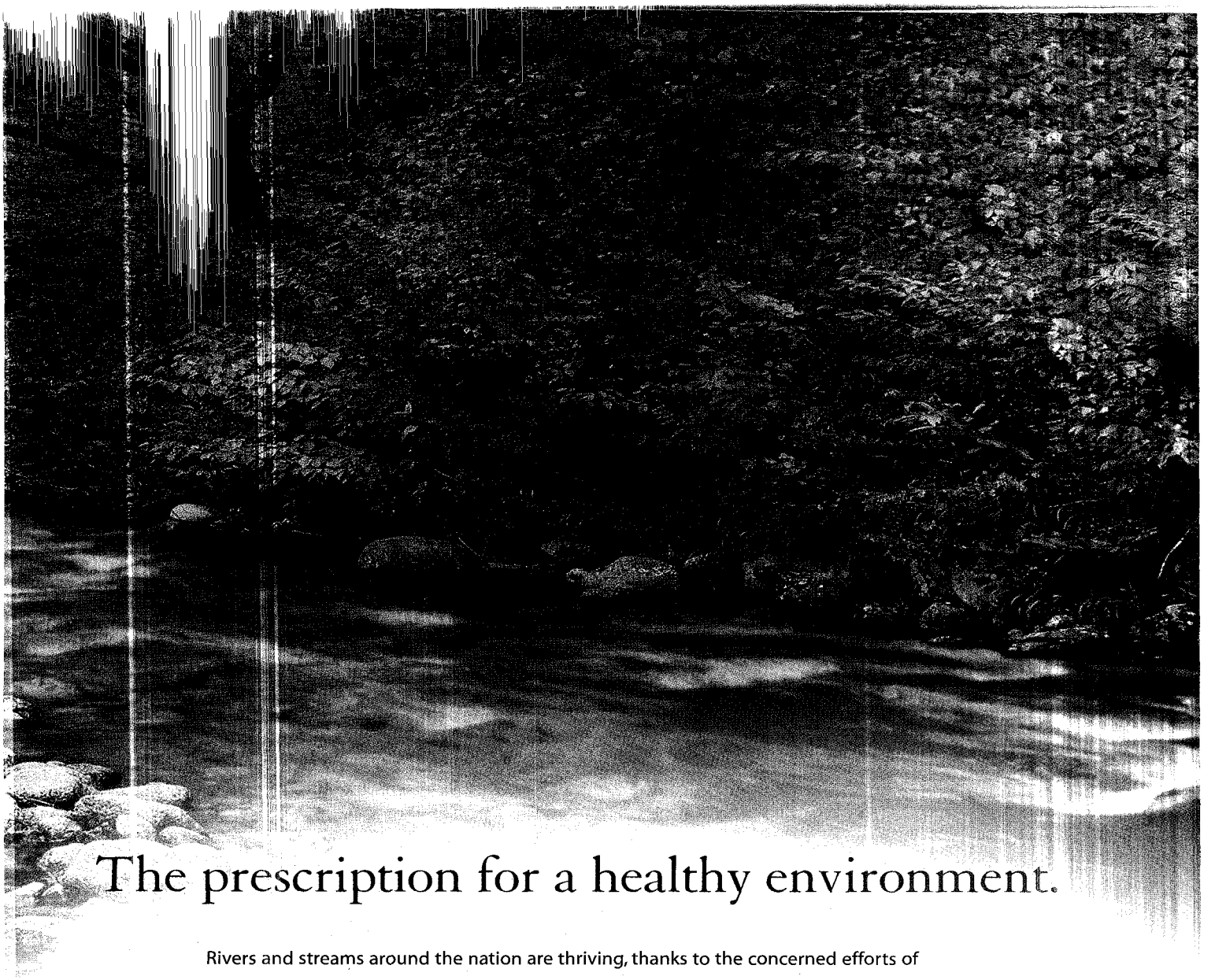

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What ails Cuban health care.

SILENT TREATMENT

By David Van Sickle

One year ago, Cuban state security agents arrived at the home of Dr. Desi Mendoza, stuffed him into a motorcycle sidecar, and took him to jail. Mendoza, a 43-year-old physician and founder of the unofficial Independent Medical Association, was hardly surprised. In the weeks leading up to his arrest, Mendoza had drawn international attention to an epidemic of dengue fever, a viral illness transmitted by mosquitoes, and accused the government of trying to cover it up rather than take necessary steps to limit its toll.

Today, Mendoza remains in jail despite failing health, mounting pressure from organizations like Amnesty International, and Pope John Paul II's recent visit, which eventually won the release of more than 90 of Cuba's estimated 300 political prisoners. But there's more than the well-being of one courageous physician at stake here. Mendoza's case raises questions about human rights abuses on the island and about the candor with which totalitarian governments share information about infectious diseases. Cuban officials now acknowledge that the first cases of dengue were detected as early as January 1997—nearly five months before Cuba notified the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the World Health Organization, which publishes such statistics to alert governments and health experts around the world.

The Mendoza case also calls into question the widely held assumption that Cuba's health care system remains a model for the world. Even President Clinton and the Pope have endorsed this bit of conventional wisdom, yet, as the Mendoza case illustrates, it's not so easy to draw a line between the repressive downside of Cuban communism and the social welfare upside. Health care is not only a bureaucratic enterprise; it is also a scientific and intellectual one. You can't have a first-class medical system unless health care professionals feel free to exchange opinions and information on all subjects relevant to their fields. This is taken for granted in the United States, where huge controversies have erupted when doctors were said to face "gag rules" in telling patients about such topics as abortion or their HMO financing arrangements. In Fidel Castro's Cuba, society itself is under a gag rule.

The outbreak Mendoza revealed was the first report of dengue from Cuba since 1981, when a new strain of the virus caused more than 340,000 cases of the disease and hospitalized an estimated 116,000 people in a three-month period. Back then, Cuba reacted with a rigorous and largely successful campaign to eradicate the virus, but, in 1996, when Cuba reportedly requested insecticide and fogging equipment, U.S. public health officials began to suspect that the mosquito, *Aedes aegypti*, had returned.

The effects of dengue range from painful influenza-like syndromes to severe and fatal hemorrhagic shock. While there is no cure for dengue, supportive therapy is readily available, and isolation can help prevent further transmission. But, because a mild infection of dengue fever can easily be mistaken for a case of the flu, it's essential to alert both patients and physicians whenever an epidemic threatens.

Yet, when the cases started piling up, Cuban officials said nothing—not to their own citizens and not to the outside world. Eventually, Mendoza contacted the independent news organization CubaPress, which published his warnings over the Internet, and denounced a government policy requiring doctors to report the disease simply as influenza-like symptoms. "The authorities didn't want the patients or their families to know [they had dengue], because they considered the epidemic a political issue," he told CubaPress, "and they didn't want the information to reach a foreigner and affect tourism." (Castro's attempts to salvage the island's economy depend heavily on tourism, and a large trade fair was scheduled for the summer of 1997.) Within days, ProMED, an e-mail news service that reports on infectious disease outbreaks, was on to the story. Finally, one day after ProMED published a request for information on the Cuban outbreak, the Cuban Ministry of Health notified PAHO that, indeed, new cases had appeared.

It was an embarrassing reversal given the recent denials, and Deputy Health Minister Ramon Diaz Vallina downplayed its significance. "There are not thousands of sufferers," he told reporters. "It is not an epidemic, and we are not in a situation of alarm or anything of the sort." But accounts in CubaPress and foreign media reported that the outbreak was intensifying in Santiago, Cuba's second-largest city, and had spread to other areas of the island, packing university hospitals and treatment centers.

When authorities brought Mendoza to trial last November, they argued that Mendoza deliberately exaggerated the size of the epidemic, with "the intention of creating uncertainty, confusion, and panic in the Cuban population." But, while a court convicted him on charges of "disseminating enemy propaganda"—and sentenced him to eight years in prison—it now appears that the figures Mendoza gave to CubaPress correspond with the final total of suspected cases (17,114) published early this year by scientists at the Cuban Institute of Tropical Medicine. (Cuban authorities maintain that many suspected cases were false alarms.) As for Mendoza's other allegations, Cuban officials argue that they were on the case from the beginning. But the first

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reports of any public health efforts came in June, when the government was fumigating from airplanes and truck-mounted sprayers—a technique largely ineffective against an insect that spends most of its time indoors.

The entire region may be at risk, too. It would be several days before a traveler to Cuba who became infected on the island felt sick. And, if he was one of the 1,300 people per week who travel between Cuba and Florida, and he returned home in that period, the virus would come with him. It's impossible to know now whether such transmissions actually occurred, but the possibility of a dengue outbreak in the U.S. is quite real. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 481 confirmed cases of imported dengue were reported in the U.S. between 1977 and 1994. The mosquito already flourishes in several regions, and dengue cases have begun to dot the southern borders. "I think there is concern that it's just a matter of time before we get dengue in our own country," says Dr. Linda Lloyd, a San Diego-based medical anthropologist who has worked with PAHO and is an expert on dengue control in Latin America. "And, if it comes in, it will go through our communities like wildfire, because we don't have any resistance to it."

In Thailand, where dengue has become a leading cause of hospitalization and death among children, the government expects more than 300,000 cases this year, the highest rate in 40 years. Indonesia, Singapore, and Vietnam are suffering record numbers of cases as well. To ward off an epidemic in this hemisphere, physicians need effective surveillance and international cooperation—precisely what the Cuban government failed to provide.

DAVID VAN SICKLE is a graduate student in medical anthropology at the University of Arizona.

Remembering Barry Goldwater.

BARRY'S WAY

By John B. Judis

Barry Goldwater, who died May 29 in Phoenix, is being deservedly praised as a patriot and as a politician of unusual integrity. Goldwater could be counted on to speak his mind—whatever happened to be on it. He disdained politicians who based their beliefs on focus groups and who ran for office by using "wedge issues" to destroy their opponents. When vice presidential nominee Dan Quayle visited Phoenix during the 1988 campaign to seek the old conservative's benediction, Goldwater told him at a joint press conference, "I hope you take this kindly, but I want you to go back and tell George Bush to start talking about the issues, okay?" When Goldwater retired from the Senate, he didn't use his name and connections to get rich as a lobbyist on K Street, as two former Senate majority leaders have done recently. He instead returned to Arizona to fiddle with his ham radio dials and to needle the "checkbook clergy" of the religious right.

Goldwater could use strong language when provoked. When he finally realized in 1976 that Richard Nixon had gulled him, he was furious and didn't mince words. "He came as close to destroying this country as any one man in that office has ever come," Goldwater declared in an interview from his home on "Good Morning America." "I wouldn't speak to that sonofabitch if he was dying of thirst out in this desert." But Goldwater recoiled at employing a politics that sought to divide and inflame people. In October 1964, campaign aides Clifton White and Rus Walton (later a leader of the religious right) produced a film called *Choice* that they wanted to air for Goldwater. The film, produced under the banner of Mothers for a Moral America, featured shots of black rioters, beatniks, and bare-breasted women. It was precisely the appeal—if in more veiled forms—that Nixon would make in his 1968 campaign for "law and order" and against "permissiveness." But Goldwater vetoed it. "I'm not going to be made out as a racist," he told White.

Goldwater was a good and, perhaps, great American, a man whose personal example would be worthy of emulation by today's crop of Sunbelt malcontents. But was he also a great politician and political leader? As a five-term senator, he had one important bill to his name—the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986—but it was passed largely through the efforts of Senator Sam Nunn. Were his ideas worthy of emulation? Was he "ahead of his time" in 1964, as his able biographer Lee Edwards wrote in *The Wall Street Journal*? Goldwater deserved praise for the courage of his convictions but not for the convictions themselves, which were reactionary and irresponsible and which were largely abandoned by later conservative politicians.

Goldwater's candidacy in 1964 was based on positions that put him at odds not only with Lyndon Johnson and the Democrats but also with Dwight Eisenhower and modern Republicanism. Goldwater rejected the strategy of containment, which had been developed by George Kennan, Dean Acheson, and the Truman administration, then accepted by Eisenhower. According to this strategy, the Soviet Union, if held in check, particularly in Europe, would eventually succumb to the strain of maintaining and policing its own empire. This strategy eventually proved to be eerily correct, but Goldwater opposed it in favor of what was called "rollback." He criticized the Eisenhower administration for not intervening militarily in Hungary in 1956, and he advocated mobile task forces with nuclear weapons that could intervene immediately in the case of future revolts. "There can be no middle alternative between a policy aimed at victory and one that would permit defeat," Goldwater declared in *Why Not Victory?* Such a foreign

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policy would have risked a disastrous war in Europe—a war that proved to be unnecessary to win the cold war.

Goldwater rejected the underlying principle of the New and Fair Deals, which Eisenhower had accepted: Government should provide a minimal level of security for the unemployed, the infirm, and the aged, and government should deploy the nation's resources for worthwhile ends (for instance, science education or highway construction) that the private sector would not undertake on its own. He attacked Eisenhower's penurious budgets as "demonstrating tendencies to bow to the siren song of socialism." In his 1964 campaign, he advocated making social security "voluntary," which would have undermined it as a program of universal insurance by allowing wealthy taxpayers to opt out, placing the burden of maintaining the system on those least able to afford it.

Finally, Goldwater defied the Republican leadership as well as the Johnson administration in opposing the 1964 Civil Rights Act forbidding discrimination in public accommodations and employment and in programs that receive federal assistance. Goldwater claimed that he was acting according to constitutional principle rather than racial prejudice. He told a campaign rally in Columbia, South Carolina, in October of 1964: "Freedom is diminished when barriers are raised against the freedom not to associate.... We are being asked to destroy the rights of some under the false banner of promoting the 'civil rights' of others." Goldwater also told Southern voters that fall that he would oppose forthcoming voting rights legislation if it applied to state and local as well as national elections. Perhaps Goldwater believed that he was acting as a student of the Founding Fathers, but his position on civil rights ignored the lessons of the Civil War as clearly as his economic positions ignored the lessons of the Great Depression. His was an ignorant and incendiary stance that had already cost the country a decade of racial strife.

Goldwater's candidacy in 1964 is often pictured as the precursor to Reagan's victory in 1980—George Will writes that "Goldwater's message was given wings by Reagan's mellifluous voice"—but, in order to win major offices over the next 16 years, conservative politicians, including Reagan, had to repudiate, rather than give voice to, Goldwater's message. In Reagan's 1966 gubernatorial campaign, he set a precedent by focusing on the social liberalism of the '60s rather than on the economic liberalism of the New Deal. (Reagan asked Goldwater to stay out of the state during the election.) During the 1970s, neoconservatives successfully transformed Goldwater conservatism into Eisenhower Republicanism. By 1980, Martin Luther King was becoming a conservative icon, and, in that year's presidential election, Reagan proclaimed his support for the New Deal "safety net" and the constitutionality of the Civil Rights Acts. And he assured the public that he didn't plan to start a war against the Soviet Union or its proxies.

Goldwater, of course, moderated his own views over the years. In 1976, he defied Reagan and his fellow conservatives by backing negotiations on the Panama Canal Treaty. He tangled with CIA Director William Casey over the mining of Nicaragua's harbors. After he retired from the Senate in 1986, he championed gay rights and abortion rights and chaired the campaign to recall Republican Governor Evan Mecham from office. In 1992, he endorsed a Democratic congressional candidate against the former Bush administration liaison to the Christian right.

I know the comparison will seem profane to many conservatives, but I would liken Goldwater's political contribution to that of Malcolm X. There is more to it than the fact that both men courted heresy in their final years and that both became famous as the authors of books that they didn't personally write. (Malcolm's autobiography was ghosted by Alex Haley; Goldwater's *Conscience of a Conservative* by William F. Buckley's brother-in-law, Brent Bozell.)

Both men have left Americans a similar political legacy. Malcolm, like Goldwater, is lionized and idealized by his followers. His ideas are given the status of Holy Writ, even though they were rooted in an absurd theology. Malcolm finally abandoned the Black Muslim faith—not for Great Society liberalism, but an unwieldy mixture of Sunni Islam and Socialist Workers Party Trotskyism. Yet the example of Malcolm X's life transcends his ideas. He was a thief who became a tribune of his people. He was a man of honor and integrity who, unlike his onetime disciple Louis Farrakhan, was unwilling to countenance the hypocrisy of Elijah Muhammad and who risked, and ultimately gave his life, to expose this sham. Goldwater, too, is best remembered for how he lived, and what he ultimately lived for, not for the gravity or wisdom of his political opinions. He was a saint among the sinners of K Street and the Capitol Hill cloakrooms—and his example will live and inspire, even if his ideas do not. •

KASHMIR DISPATCH

BORDERLINE

By Ana Menendez

The village of Bandala Seri is separated from the rest of Pakistan by a two-hour drive through scrub brush and across thin mountain streams that stain the twisting road a deep red. That road finally untangles in a valley ringed by steep hills that form the first climb toward the Himalayas. Goats graze in the fields below, and barley grows in orderly rows. But Bandala Seri is hardly a vision of pastoral bliss. When night falls, searchlights blaze like campfires high on the hilltops, and the valley echoes with the thud of

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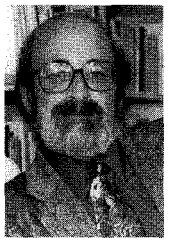

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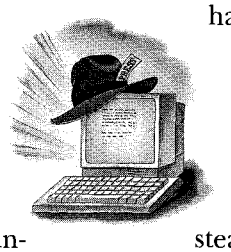
distant shelling. Balanced on the border between India and Pakistan in the southern tip of Kashmir, the village lies deep in the heart of disputed territory, and the reminders have been frequent and harsh.

Pakistan currently controls one-third of Kashmir; India manages most of the rest. Neither is happy with the terms of ownership. The two enemies rub up against each other along a 450-mile border through the Kashmiri mountains known as the "line of control," a name more wishful than true. In April, midnight raiders, presumably from India, slipped into Bandala Seri and massacred 23 people, leaving threatening leaflets behind. The walls of one home are still speckled with blood.

But, instead of moving away, Bandala Seri's villagers just took up more weapons. "Whenever there is firing, everybody wakes up and gathers in one house," said Rizwan Mahmood. "If there is a panic, and people think that the Indians have come into the area, the people fire off their own guns."

For 50 years, the litany of murders and atrocities committed on both sides in Kashmir has done little to rouse American interest in what has long been seen as yet another distant war over competing territorial claims. But, of all the world's little battlefields, Kashmir now holds the heart-stopping distinction of being the only one surrounded by three avowedly nuclear powers.



China and India have a dormant territorial dispute in the north, over which the two countries fought a war in 1962. And India and Pakistan's ongoing skirmishing along the line of control in the Kashmiri spine makes this ancient mountain kingdom the most likely spot in the world for a political misunderstanding to turn nuclear.

India and Pakistan have already fought three wars in the last 50 years, two of them over Kashmir. In 1990, a crisis between the two countries that seemed headed for a nuclear exchange was only forestalled by the last-minute intervention of American diplomats. Meanwhile, the low-level combat in Kashmir has continued unabated. In Muzaffarabad, the provincial capital on the Pakistani side, shelling lights up the horizon at night, throwing the disputed mountains into dark relief. In nearby Mirpur, the early morning shells land close enough to shake the ground. "Anytime, they can start firing," says Bandala Seri villager Munir Ahmed.

India's nuclear tests last month only deepened the crisis in the mountains. And Pakistan's feeble scramble to catch up began to look like a macabre primer on how jingoism and machismo can catapult low-grade hostilities into a ruinous endgame. Almost immediately following the tests, both countries began tugging on their respective ends of Kashmir. India, run by the Hindu nationalists of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), who've long blamed Pakistan for funding an insurgency on its side of the line, warned that it would pay for fueling the conflict. Pakistan countered ominously that any Indian "misadventure" in Kashmir would be met resolutely.

Filled with foreboding, shopkeepers and goat herders on the Pakistani side of Kashmir tuned in to every word of the escalating exchange on short-wave radios. Appointments were rescheduled around the BBC World Service. In a village near Mirpur, a group of about 35 men crowded around a single television set pulled out into the street. "I have no doubt the countries will go to war again, and it will be a fatal war for the subcontinent," said Mian Ghulam Rasool, a state assemblyman in Pakistani Kashmir. "Surely, it will be nuclear."

If that should happen, it would be the culmination of centuries of religious conflict. Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam each had its heyday here, and religion remains so central in this part of the world that hotel forms routinely ask visitors to list their faith alongside their name and nationality.

The current dispute dates to the late 1940s, when the British split the Raj into Muslim Pakistan and Hindu India. Kashmir—wedged between the two nations both physically and spiritually—could have gone either way. The last prince of Kashmir, Maharaja Hari Singh, was a Hindu, but more than two-thirds of the province's population was Muslim. As Hindus and Muslims massacred one another throughout the subcontinent following partition, the Maharaja bided his time, shopping around for the best deal. Then Pathan tribesmen invaded from Pakistan and decided Kashmir's fate for him. The prince hastily signed over Kashmir to India.

Angered that Kashmir's Muslims were never consulted, Pakistan has contested the decision ever since. U.N. resolutions for a plebiscite in Kashmir remain unheeded. The Muslim majority in India's part of Kashmir—as well as in neighboring Jammu province—has kept up a steady insurgency against the Hindu rulers. Pakistan has supported this insurgency, even after it became clear the rebels were also slaughtering civilians.

India claims that Pakistan is sheltering the militants in border villages like Bandala Seri. Along the border, the Muslim villagers insist—not always convincingly—that the militants are elsewhere. "There are no rebels here," says Zufkar Ali, who survived two gunshots to the stomach in the April raid on Bandala Seri. Of course, if India attacks, Bandala Seri will be ready. "We are Muslims, and we are not afraid," he says, using a phrase so often repeated here that it begins to seem like an incantation.

Far outnumbering any potential militants is the multitude of war refugees from Indian Kashmir that Pakistan is now sheltering in camps built into the hills near Muzaffarabad. Most of the camps were started after the fighting intensified in 1989. After almost ten years, the tattered tents are giving way to brick and cement buildings, a quiet acknowledgement that little is likely to change in Kashmir before the elements have their way with temporary solutions.

Though the Pakistani government restricts reporters' access to the line of control, it is eager to provide tours of the refugee camps. There, men who have fled border villages recount stories of torture at the hands of Indian security forces. Women tell of gang rapes and long marches in the snow. "In broad daylight they would take someone away for investigations and never return," said

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Resham Jan, who has lived in the camp for three years and doesn't expect to leave soon. "The life on the border is hard. Here, we don't have our land, but there is peace."

On the other side of the line, Hindu villages have suffered their own atrocities at the hands of Muslim separatists. For example, the April attack on Bandala Seri was widely seen as revenge for two earlier attacks on Hindu villages. U.S. State Department reports on human rights accuse both Indian security forces and separatist militants of executions, torture, and brutality. At least 20,000 have died in the fighting, and even foreigners have been swept into the hostilities. An American is among several climbers kidnapped in 1995 and presumed murdered during an expedition in Kashmir.

Ironically, the enmity between India and Pakistan obscures the fact that many Kashmiris consider themselves kin of neither. "Kashmir was never part of the subcontinent," says Raja Muhammad Muzaffar, a former chairman of the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front. "We have nothing to do with them." Muzaffar's blue eyes hint at Kashmir's varied heritage. Rimmed by the Himalayas and the Hindu Kush, Kashmir borders the old Central Asian trade routes. It has its own language and even a different way of making tea—an important distinction in these parts.

This is one reason that, while Pakistan and India fight over ownership of Kashmir, people like Muzaffar are calling for an independent state. It also explains why many regard the permanent division of Kashmir as unacceptable. "It would be most unnatural," says Rasool, the Kashmiri assemblyman. "The mother is there, and the daughter is here. Why divide the families? You talk of human rights; how human is that?"

Rasool adds, conspiratorially, that only one solution exists in Kashmir: "If the U.S. doesn't want there to be a war, then there will not be a war." All over Kashmir, villagers repeat this same insistent plea. In Muzzaffarabad, a 32-year-old woman spent more than an hour retelling the painful details of her rape by Indian soldiers. Suddenly, she grew animated and began to speak in rapid Urdu. "You are an American," she said. "You are a big power. You must think about us. Put us under your umbrella. Please give shelter to us."

This is hardly the first time the U.S. has been asked to broker a solution in Kashmir. But any inclination it might have to do so has been quickly cooled by India, which, with an army twice the size of Pakistan's, has repeatedly insisted that matters be left up to the two of them. And, even now, after India and Pakistan have conducted nuclear tests, the U.S. initially showed little willingness to take any action beyond the limited sanctions and public condemnations it has resorted to in the past. Even if U.S. attitude changes, India's BJP government is unlikely to welcome mediation in Kashmir.

The road out of Bandala Seri crosses a stream and begins to climb before passing through another village with an outdoor stand where travelers can buy refreshments. A torch illuminates the store's hand-painted Pepsi sign—the closest thing to an American presence, one suspects, this area will ever see.

ANA MENENDEZ is a writer based in New Delhi.

Repairing race relations after Prop 209.

THE NEXT RECONSTRUCTION

By Tamar Jacoby

Sometimes, there is nothing more discouraging than a glimpse of the best we can do, and, when it comes to race relations, you see it in Atlanta. I spent a lot of time there recently reporting a book about race, and what I found was that the conventional wisdom is right: Blacks and whites get along better in Atlanta than just about anywhere else in America. It's a majority-black city and a well-known mecca for black professionals. But unlike whites in many urban areas with majority-black populations—Detroit, for example—Atlanta's middle-class whites have stayed in town. The economy is flourishing. The city's public life, in restaurants, theaters, parks, and shopping malls, is encouragingly integrated, and both blacks and whites feel they have a stake in the booming future.

Still, for all that, Martin Luther King's dream—a single community in which both blacks and whites would feel truly at home—is as elusive in Atlanta as anywhere in America. The problem is different from what it used to be and is sometimes hard to define. Impoverished blacks are as alienated in Atlanta as anywhere in the country; most whites are just as indifferent to black poverty. But,

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even among the middle class, there is something missing in Atlanta. Whites live on one side of town, blacks on the other, their tree-lined streets and private schools and clubs often indistinguishable but still color-coded—now voluntarily so. Almost everyone in the city has occasion to work with someone of the other race, but very few have made real friendships across the color line. I asked one white man, a well-known journalist who has been covering the city's black establishment for more than 25 years, whether he did much socializing with black colleagues after office hours. "I can count the number of times I've been in a black home on the fingers of one hand," he told me. "Race relations?" asked another white man, a longtime liberal who had also spent his life working alongside blacks. "We don't have race relations in Atlanta anymore."

Unfortunately, when it comes to race, Atlanta is typical. Abigail and Stephan Thernstrom, Orlando Patterson, and others who remind us how much race relations have changed for the better are right. But we still haven't achieved the ideal of the 1960s. Comfortable and prosperous a life as it is, what prevails in Atlanta isn't racial harmony. It's peaceful coexistence—a wary truce between two groups who believe they are fundamentally different and will always live separately.

How did this happen? It's not just that we're tired or defeated or settling for this. On the contrary. We've let it happen, even caused it to happen, by deciding that this is all we're aiming for. In the years since the civil rights era, we've concluded that it doesn't make sense to think of ourselves as one community. We talk now about the "African American community" and the "Asian community"—and we think what makes us different from one another is more important than what we have in common. Blacks and whites assume that the other group was formed by a different culture, that "they" want to be different—and that they're part of another America.

Partly, of course, this is a product of the mistrust and alienation built up over centuries. But, in the last 35 years, instead of figuring out how to move beyond those habits, we've embraced them, and, today, in the wake of California's Proposition 209, we are about to make the same mistake again. Faced with the results of repealing affirmative action, many analysts—most notably the social scientist Nathan Glazer writing in TNR's pages some weeks ago (see "In Defense of Preference," April 6)—have argued that it's worth reinstating preferences in order to preserve what little integration we have. But to settle for that would be to miss the opportunity to achieve much more.

Of course, it's easy to see the attraction of the status quo. Peaceful coexistence is easier than forging new, more respectful and equitable ways to live together. Peaceful coexistence allows everyone to hold on to stereotypes: we never get close enough, after all, to disabuse ourselves. It lets whites go on thinking that they've done enough to help, even as it spares blacks the need to put aside old grudges. We glory in the small particulars that set us and ours apart and shrug off the challenge of figuring out who we are as individuals or, more important still, what it is we all have in common. As with any skewed relationship, creating this standoff has been a joint effort, but, after centuries of unfulfilled promises, it's hard to blame blacks for their alienation. What's harder to justify is the way that whites—usually well-meaning whites in positions of power—have chosen to meet the challenge of black inequality by effectively fostering a separate black America.

This pattern began in the mid-1960s, when the Malcolm-X-inspired ideal of Black Power began to eclipse King's integrationist credo. Black Power argued that the country was inherently racist, that blacks were fundamentally different from whites, that they would never be fully at home here, and that they were right to be angry at what the system had done to them. Well into the '60s, polls showed black America deeply divided on these issues: drawn to the showy anger of the Stokely Carmichaels and H. Rap Browns but still hopeful and largely intent on inclusion. Yet, in the name of racial peace, well-meaning liberals encouraged the Black Power movement, even glamorized it, rather than committing the nation to the hard work of addressing the discontent that gave rise to black demagogues.

The same phenomenon repeated itself in the later '60s when black youths took to the streets, looting and burning their own broken-down communities. There were no short-cut answers to the frustration that drove these kids to violence: Once the most obvious barriers had been leveled by the great civil rights laws, the much more intractable problem was mainly one of social inequality. But, instead of counseling education and job training and work, well-meaning whites on the Kerner Commission and elsewhere endorsed the rioters' impatience and scrambled to find easy ways to address it. The War on Poverty, with its substantive emphasis on schooling and work habits, was abandoned by Republicans and Democrats alike, and in its place Americans resorted to a host of quick-fix solutions: color-coded electoral districts instead of real political power; racial preferences to create the appearance of equality; guilty deference masquerading as respect; symbolic gestures; and cash grants.

In the cultural realm, too, whites have opted again and again to encourage quick fixes instead of hard work—in this case, the difficult and ever more elusive challenge of forging a real interracial community. Like hiring preferences and electoral apportionment to insure that black voters are represented by black officials, identity politics makes life easier for everyone. Black students live in black dorms—and life goes on as usual elsewhere on campus. Black scholars celebrate Africa, and we all honor Black History Month. But almost no one gives any serious thought to how to move beyond this tokenism. Meanwhile, in the name of multiculturalism, we've encouraged a generation of young blacks to believe that the main thing they bring to school and work is not their

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talents or skills but their "black point of view." We accept, even preach, the doctrine that the races are fundamentally different and that the best we can hope for is an edgy meeting across the gulf we approvingly label "diversity." Well-intentioned as such deference may be, it will not lead to inclusion. On the contrary, it can only delay the kind of push that is still needed to bridge the gap, particularly for the poorest blacks with the fewest chances and most meager skills.

After more than 30 years of short-cut answers, there is much damage to undo. And yet we are about to make the same mistake again. Proposition 209 in California has shown just how little preferences really achieved. Racial outreach brought black students to public campuses, but it did nothing to prepare them for the challenges they would meet there. And now that preferences have been dropped many blacks cannot get in. The number of black freshmen in the University of California system will drop by 18 percent this fall, the number at the elite Berkeley campus by 57 percent—from 5.6 percent of the freshman class to 2.4 percent. Most Americans are appalled by these numbers, but, instead of recognizing our error, many well-meaning whites are urging us to restore some version of the old preferences.

Of course, tackling the underlying causes of black academic underachievement would be much harder and much more expensive. It would mean overhauling the public school system. It would mean an extensive public relations effort to reverse the widespread sense among young African Americans that doing well in school is "acting white." It would mean making the streets of the inner city safe enough for children to get to school and study without fear. And all of that together would only take care of kindergarten through twelfth grade, leaving us the still-harder tasks of pre-college preparation and job training—not to mention improving the education at second-tier colleges like the University of California-Riverside campus, where the number of black freshmen has jumped, in the wake of Prop 209, by 34 percent.

This is the task we started with the War on Poverty and then gave up abruptly when we grasped just how big a chore it was. What we know now is that it probably isn't a job for government or, at least, government alone. It will take a concerted effort by the private and public sectors, blacks and whites, religious institutions, and a broad range of leaders at the grassroots and higher up. But slapping the Band-Aid of preferences back on will not replace the work that's needed—only defer it yet again and prolong the divided way we live.

Those who argue for reinstating affirmative action cite mostly pragmatic reasons. "The painful facts make it necessary," Glazer writes. The facts he cites are certainly discouraging: not just next year's U.C. admissions rates but also the persistent gap between black and white SAT scores, the distressingly high black college dropout rate, the continued unraveling of the black family, and more. Glazer and others don't quite say so, but what they conclude from these figures is that there's little point in a national effort to improve life chances for blacks. We haven't been able to raise black academic performance yet, they reason. Why should the future be different?

The problem with this reasoning is that America hasn't really tried yet. More than 30 years after the launching of the War on Poverty, we're only beginning to zero in on the kinds of development programs that work. Most of us have only recently grasped just how small a part government can play in stimulating the slow, hard personal transformation that economist Glenn Loury describes with the phrase, "One by one from the inside out." The nation as a whole has never mustered anything like the collective will to push government and business to do what they can; in fact, for reasons of racial sensitivity, we've hardly been able to talk about the nature of the push that's needed. And not even our best pilot efforts, many of them mounted by the inner-city churches, have been tried on a scale commensurate with the problem. Social and cultural development is a long, slow process, and, even under the best of circumstances, it can take several generations. But surely it would be wrong to give up without trying.

Part of the reason the challenge is so daunting is that much of it has to do with attitudes—attitudes toward school and work but also toward one's place in the larger culture—and here is where the mainstream has been sending all the wrong signals. The idea that blacks and whites are basically different, that we can never escape the past, that peaceful coexistence between two mistrustful groups is as good as it gets—all of this trickles down through the culture and poisons attitudes. The message is repeated and reinforced daily in countless ways, some of them explicit—some as innocuous as the idea that only black adults can be role models for black kids. No wonder many black students hesitate to make an effort in school; they've learned to see school as training for life in an alien civilization. No wonder ghetto youth are more likely to disobey the law; to them, the law is the arm of an age-old enemy. No wonder even middle-class blacks making their way into the system are often demoralized, convinced that the "white world" will never be fair to them.

Well-meaning whites didn't create this alienation; it's been three centuries in the making. But, instead of getting better with the progress of the last few decades, if anything, black estrangement is getting worse. The first step to reverse this trend is a sustained program of acculturation and education for the poorest and most alienated blacks, but it will have to come twinned with a new, more hopeful message about community. What we have in common is more important than our differences. Martin Luther King wasn't wrong about America or blacks' place in it, and there is all the reason in the world for trying—at school, at work, in getting along, and at doing what has to be done to heal the ghetto. This is a demanding agenda, but it is the only antidote to the weary peaceful coexistence that passes for race relations in America today. •

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WHICH DOCTORS?

By Robert Dreyfuss

The Clinton administration has held literally dozens of press conferences on health care reform, but there was something remarkable about President Clinton's briefing at the White House last week. Clinton was making a pitch for the administration's rather modest proposal to create a "patient bill of rights," and among those appearing with him was none other than Dr. Regina Benjamin, a board member of the American Medical Association who was there to offer her organization's support.

It was remarkable because, for the better part of this century, the AMA has mostly been at odds with health-care-reforming Democrats. During the 1940s, the AMA was instrumental in killing Harry Truman's proposal for national health insurance; in the 1960s, it fought Lyndon Johnson's Medicare proposals. (That was one of the few times the group lost.) When Democrats took another run at universal health care coverage five years ago, the AMA joined insurance companies in blocking comprehensive reform.

But times have changed. Doctors used to oppose health care reform because they reasoned, quite rightly, that federal intrusions would curtail their autonomy and curb their incomes. Now, for-profit insurance companies have done precisely that, which has some physicians wondering whether a little government involvement would really be so bad. At least among younger doctors who never knew the independence that characterized earlier eras, the idea of increased government regulation isn't so unthinkable.

While doctors are still a predominantly conservative bunch, more liberal groups have begun to splinter off—and speak out. Already, medical societies in Maryland and the District of Columbia have come out for Canadian-style, single-payer health care; a poll of D.C. doctors showed 69 percent in favor of single-payer while other, broader polls have shown that nearly one-third of doctors favor it. The medical societies of one state and several counties have joined a campaign begun by 3,000 Massachusetts physicians to curtail the growth of for-profit medicine. In this light, the AMA's embrace of Clinton's bill of rights seems hardly extraordinary at all, particularly since it is a relatively mild measure designed more to set quality standards than to increase regulation.

Yet a closer look shows that today's AMA is still acting like the AMA of old. When it comes to restrictions on health maintenance organizations, something a physician's lobby ought to support intuitively, the organization just barely mustered the courage to break with the Republican leadership and support patient-protection legislation in Congress. And it did so only after making sure that the legislation would be shaped to doctors' liking. (For instance, a key AMA official, who served on the commission that developed the patient bill of rights, made sure that the proposal would not allow patients to see the malpractice records of physicians.) More generally, the AMA continues to try to preserve expensive fee-for-service medicine, while simultaneously assisting physicians in creating their own for-profit organizations to compete with much better capitalized, insurer-run HMOs—a move that would help a few lucky doctors, while leaving the rest at the mercy of for-profit insurers, just as they are today.

None of which would matter right now were it not for the fact that Washington still recognizes the AMA as the official voice of American medicine. With all sorts of modest health care reforms on the table—not all of which, to be sure, necessarily make sense—the medical community could perform a vital and constructive role in reshaping the nation's health care system. But, rather than join the current debate, the AMA is still fighting the health care wars of the 1950s at the expense of health consumers—and even some health care providers.

It would be hard to overestimate the AMA's clout in Washington. A recent study by the Center for Responsive Politics of lobbying by corporations, labor unions, and special interest groups ranked the AMA number one, by virtue of its having spent $8.5 million on lobbying in the first six months of 1997. This was more than such powerhouses as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the American Association of Retired Persons. Both *Roll Call* and *Fortune* recently placed the AMA among the top ten lobbies.

In addition to its traditional buttonholing and letter-writing, the AMA has connected 70,000 doctors to its

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blast-fax apparatus and e-mail system for urgent legislative updates and mobilizations. It also has more than 100,000 doctors plugged in to its Physicians Grassroots Network: By dialing 1-800-833-6354 and punching in an AMA i.d. number, members are briefed on the organization's legislative agenda and then connected, toll-free, to their members of Congress.

An impressive display of the AMA's power took place in early March at the organization's annual National Leadership Conference. Lining up to address the gathering was a constellation of Washington superstars: President Clinton, Speaker Newt Gingrich, Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, Senators Ted Kennedy and Phil Gramm, as well as Representative Bill Thomas, chairman of the House Ways and Means Health Subcommittee. Following the conference, AMA delegates descended on Capitol Hill to keep appointments with senators and congressmen arranged by state medical society officials in coordination with the AMA's Washington office.

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

The AMA's political action committee, AMPAC, is consistently one of the nation's wealthiest, dispensing more than $4 million in 1995–96. Of the $2.4 million in congressional contributions, $1.9 million went to Republicans, which isn't entirely surprising given the GOP's traditional opposition to health care reform. What is surprising, however, is that the AMA also delivered $10,000 jackpots to the House's three most loyal supporters of the National Rifle Association—Bob Barr of Georgia, Helen Chenoweth of Idaho, and then-Representative Steve Stockman of Texas—even as it endorsed gun control in the name of public health. (The AMA's political contributions and public health positions are similarly at odds when it comes to abortion and tobacco.)

Against this backdrop, the AMA's support for the patient bill of rights—whose chief advocates include Ted Kennedy, longtime proponent of national health insurance—might seem strange. But, for the AMA, supporting the bill of rights is simply an expedient way to achieve the group's larger goal: restoring fee-for-service medicine and rolling back government involvement (except when that involvement is profitable for physicians), even if that means driving up health care costs or depriving more people of coverage.

For example, in recent years, the AMA has joined a panoply of free-market think tanks, like the Cato Institute, the Dallas-based National Center for Policy Analysis, and the American Legislative Exchange Council, in supporting Medical Savings Accounts—tax-free, IRA-like accounts that benefit chiefly the healthy and affluent. A slew of actuaries, accountants, tax experts, and research groups have all warned that MSAs could undermine Medicare and other insurance "risk pools," thus inflating overall costs and depriving people of coverage. But the AMA likes MSAs because they short-circuit managed-care companies and put health care dollars back into the hands of patients, who are then free to pay doctors directly. And, almost like the old days, doctors can charge whatever they want for their services.

The AMA has also joined an ersatz retirees' lobby called the United Seniors Association in support of legislation that would drastically expand the ability of doctors to engage in private contracting with Medicare recipients, often at rates significantly higher than Medicare pays. Consumer groups and the American Association of Retired Persons oppose the measure because they fear it would make it harder for less affluent elderly patients to get care. They also fear it would open the door to widespread Medicare fraud by doctors. These are valid concerns, and they help explain why the 100,000-member American College of Physicians, which represents the vast majority of the nation's internists, opposes the AMA on this issue.

And the AMA is supporting the Republican congressional leadership's ongoing efforts to make a dramatic change in the tax code. Under this scheme, businesses would no longer be able to take employee health care

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expenses as a tax deduction—only employees would. The AMA likes this idea because it would prevent big employers from herding employees into cost-effective health care plans. But such a change would almost certainly make it more—not less—difficult for the vast majority of Americans to get insurance, and it would quite possibly add to the ranks of the uninsured. (In effect, the proposal would destroy the group bargaining power that allows employers to bid down insurance premiums and thus keep insurance affordable.)

To be sure, even the powerful AMA may not have the strength to push these changes through—particularly since any initiatives that drive up costs will surely alienate the business community as well. Accordingly, the AMA has also tried to help doctors become health care entrepreneurs who can profit from the very managed-care system they so despise.

If physicians are clever (or lucky) enough to take advantage of such opportunities, the potential for profit is indeed vast. Consider Joseph C. Hutts, one of four people who in 1987 founded PhyCor in Nashville, Tennessee, and who now serves as the company's CEO. PhyCor is what is known as a physician practice management company (PPMC). In the decade since its creation, PhyCor has grown into a $1 billion-a-year publicly traded corporation with 55 multi-specialty clinics and more than 20,000 physicians in clinics and IPAs, or independent practice associations. Adroitly marshaling venture capital, Hutts and his partners began buying many physicians' practices and supplying management services to others.

According to Kenneth Ackerman, a health care business consultant with McManis Associates, the rapid growth of PhyCor and other PPMCs is just the beginning. In 1990, there were only three publicly traded PPMCs; today, there are more than 40. Although they control less than six percent of the $200 billion doctor business, PPMCs are projected by Wall Street to absorb fully half of all doctors' practices in just a few years.

Another variant of the self-corporatization of physician practices is the so-called PSO, or provider-sponsored organization. A PSO is essentially an HMO that is owned and operated by doctors, hospitals, or both, rather than by an insurer. For many entrepreneurial physicians, the PSO is an opportunity for doctors to compete directly with insurance company HMOs in the marketplace. An article in the *American Medical News* recently pointed out that, in Georgia, about one-half of the new HMOs formed in 1996 were doctor-owned. Now, thanks to legislation backed by the AMA, PSOs are for the first time able to compete with HMOs for Medicare patients as well.

"We've supported PSOs for a long time," says Nancy Dickey, the AMA's president-elect. "We'll continue to assist physicians if they choose to [build a PSO]. We'll be a resource for physicians who want to put one together." The AMA's Physicians Capital Source, a program recently discontinued, had helped doctors find venture capital to help finance the creation of PSOs, PPMCs, and other doctor-owned corporations. In some states and communities—notably, in Connecticut, Illinois, and Harris County, Texas, according to Dickey—the AMA's own medical societies are spinning off doctor-run corporations, including HMOs.

Of course, the trouble with this strategy is that, by encouraging physicians to form their own for-profit managed-care organizations, the AMA is essentially sustaining the very system that has doctors, not to mention patients, so angry in the first place. Even if physician-sponsored organizations took over medicine completely, the vast majority of doctors would still be the employees—not the employers—and they'd still be working for companies that are primarily interested in squeezing costs in order to pad profits.

Which brings us to the great irony of the AMA's guildlike behavior: It's starting to alienate elements of its own membership base. The AMA has been losing members for decades, ceding much of its political muscle to smaller, rival specialty societies. During the AMA's bitter struggle against the creation of Medicare 35 years ago, it claimed upwards of 70 percent of doctors as dues-paying members. Today, that number is 43 percent—and, subtracting medical students, residents, retirees, and other cut-rate members, the AMA can claim to represent just 31 percent of physicians.

Last year, the AMA's continuing loss of membership resulted in a shortfall of $1.6 million in anticipated dues income to the organization, translating—at $420-per-year dues—into about 4,000 doctors who decided that the AMA wasn't worth paying for. Today, about one-third of the AMA's income derives from member dues, with the rest coming from business ventures, real estate transactions, advertising in its flagship publications, and grants from Fortune 500 companies to support AMA "public education campaigns."

Another telltale sign of the group's atrophy is its demographic profile. It's long been a truism about the AMA that its members are primarily old white men, usually private practitioners, and heavily weighted toward surgeons and specialists rather than internists, psychiatrists, and public health physicians. Today, that image is more accurate than ever. According to the AMA's own data, the association represents fewer than 35 percent of doctors in the 30 to 49 age group; 43 percent of doctors 50 to 59; and 67 percent of those 60 to 69. Among (largely retired) doctors over 70, a whopping 88 percent belong to the AMA.

Not only that, but AMA membership is increasingly concentrated in conservative areas of the country. In just twelve states does the AMA count more than 55 percent of the doctors as members; these are mostly Southern, Midwestern, and Great Plains states. (For instance, 85 percent of Oklahoma doctors belong to the AMA.) The five states where the AMA claims less than 35 percent of physicians are all states with relatively liberal politics: California, Maryland,

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Massachusetts, Puerto Rico, and Vermont.

At the March conference, speakers looked out over a sea of white faces topped with gray hair and balding pates. During one break, I strolled up and down the aisles, and out of perhaps 1,000 attendees I could discern only four black faces—at a time when blacks make up 4.5 percent of the nation's physicians. This is, in part, the residual legacy of discrimination past: As recently as 1967, according to Chicago internist and long-time AMA critic Quentin Young, activists were picketing the AMA because some of its Southern state chapters flatly refused to accept black physicians. But, while the AMA has stamped out such practices, minority members have not been joining in droves. Instead, they—like all the other younger doctors—have been increasingly signing up with groups representing segments of the profession, like the American Public Health Association, the American College of Physicians, the American Academy of Family Physicians, and the American Academy of Pediatrics. Most of these groups are less suspicious of government than the AMA, and by all accounts that's part of their appeal.

Of course, politics isn't the only reason younger doctors are getting turned off to the AMA. The highly publicized on-again, off-again deal with the Sunbeam Corporation has also tarnished the organization's image among members. In August 1997, the AMA and the Sunbeam Corporation represented by "Chainsaw" Al Dunlap, the CEO famous for brutally downsizing companies, announced that the AMA would place its seal of approval on a long list of home health products made by Sunbeam, including blood-pressure monitors, thermometers, vaporizers, and heating pads—plus, potentially, non-health-related items such as blenders, ice-cream-makers, and shish kebab grills, according to *American Medical News.* Astonishingly, none of the products would have undergone any independent testing or evaluation by the AMA. In exchange, Sunbeam would have paid the AMA millions of dollars in royalties. According to Lynn Jensen, the AMA's interim executive vice president, the AMA would have pocketed at least five or six million dollars from the contract over its five-year span.

The reaction was loud and instantaneous—not least from the AMA's own members, who overwhelmingly opposed the deal. Newspaper editorials, including a furious one in *The New York Times,* ripped into the AMA. Later, in a letter to *American Medical News,* a Connecticut doctor called it "a repugnant misstep that brought ridicule upon all American Medical Association members." Said Quentin Young: "Is the AMA a defender of the public health or the handmaiden of corporate America?"

Stunned, the AMA repudiated the deal, provoking a $20 million breach-of-contract lawsuit from Sunbeam. Then, one by one, the AMA's leaders began to fall. First to go were its chief operating officer, its group vice president for business and management, and its vice president for marketing. Weeks later, Kirk Johnson, the AMA's general counsel, resigned. Finally, on the eve of the AMA's December meeting in Dallas, the organization's executive vice president, John Seward, announced his resignation. Yet even that was not enough to quell a near-rebellion in the ranks. Several delegates demanded that the board of trustees, from chairman Thomas Reardon on down, be held accountable and resign.

What's more, as details of the Sunbeam deal began to unfold, it became clear that the arrangement had been intended to be the first of many. Reardon, who survived the turmoil by demanding an inquiry and establishing a commission of AMA elders to investigate themselves, now admits that "there were ongoing discussions with corporate America." Pressed, he says, "There were three or four others, but they were simply conversations." Court papers filed by Sunbeam in connection with its suit against the AMA declares that "investigation has revealed that the AMA does permit its name and seal to be used by consumer-products companies in connection with the sale of consumer products." An attorney for Sunbeam, who is engaged in discovery in preparation for the scheduled November 2, 1998, trial, suggests that Sunbeam will show that its AMA contract was not an anomaly but part of a pattern. (The AMA flatly denies this.)

Wish though the AMA might that the Sunbeam disaster would disappear, it could plague the organization for a long time to come. This month, the special task force will deliver its report to the AMA House of Delegates, no doubt to less than universal acclaim. And, with Sunbeam's lawyers bearing down on them in anticipation of what is sure to be a widely publicized trial in November, taking affidavits and piling up internal AMA documents, the AMA can look forward to what's likely to be a series of damaging disclosures about its business arrangements.

Given the embarrassing fallout from the Sunbeam episode, and the growing dissatisfaction with the AMA's politics, you might think the AMA's leaders would be measuring their rhetoric more carefully. But quite the opposite seems to be happening. At the March meeting, I asked two of the group's leaders how the AMA proposed to expand coverage to the 40 million Americans who lack insurance. "You know," said Jensen, "of that 40 million there is a large number of people who are electing not to be covered." Chimed in Reardon: "The biggest share of the uninsured are young people who think they're immortal and choose not to be insured." Earlier, I reminded them that the AMA only a few years ago supported an expanded employer mandate that would require most employers to buy health insurance for their workers. But Jensen, a passionate true believer in free-market economics, leaned forward, agitated. "The electorate has spoken. The employer mandate approach is not one that makes any sense," he said. "The era of big government is over, and people have embraced the market." At least, that's how the AMA would like to keep it. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Survivors

Terry Gilliam is a sorry case. Once he was part of the brightest ensemble in film history, Monty Python. With them—he was the only American in the otherwise Oxbridge company of six—he acted, cowrote, and sometimes codirected. Monty Python took high-handed, surgical sanity/insanity to the uttermost. In innumerable TV sketches and in such features as *Life of Brian* and *The Meaning of Life*, they campaigned for our culture to remain exactly as it is so that they could slash and snoot it: all of it was carried on with surreal gravity. (Talk about "Seinfeld" and comedy about nothing. What about John Cleese and the governmental Ministry of Silly Walks?)

To all effects, Monty Python disbanded in the mid-1980s. A few members have kept on working individually, Cleese and Michael Palin most notably. But Cleese was less amusing without his MP context, and Palin, who also writes, took on other sorts of acting besides comedy. Gilliam, not really useful as an actor outside the group, has concentrated on directing, and increasingly through the years he has looked like a survivor, seriously hobbled without the zanily intense cosmos created by his mates.

Gilliam's directing record since MP has been sad. *Brazil* struggled to be an MP film without the group; then matters got regressively worse. *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen* was expensively produced tedium. *The Fisher King* was a flight that simply failed to take off. *Twelve Monkeys* was a time-travel fantasy that labored lamely to be clever. Now there's **Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas** (Universal), Gilliam's latest attempt to reestablish himself as an anti-establishment figure.

About the screenplay, adapted from Hunter S. Thompson's well-known book, one of those Hollywood battles for credit has raged. It is now credited to Gilliam and his partner Tony Grisoni, along with two others. The screenplay done by Gilliam and Grisoni alone has been published, billboarded as *not* the one used for the finished film. Scholars of the future may want to ponder this authorship question; for the moment—rather a long moment, I'd guess—let's just say that, whoever wrote it, the screenplay that was filmed is a dud. *Fear and Loathing* is just a series of repetitive scenes.

A basic trouble with it is that, despite all the attenuated preparation for the film, no one apparently asked the simple question: Why? Thompson's book has had large success and has just been reissued, but a book is quite a different entity from a film in time and attention and in range of audience. Possibly some readers will still want to read about a drug binge in 1971, presented as logical response to the Vietnam War and the Nixon administration. (With a word of compassion for those who are still "humping the American dream.") But not even all of them, I'd guess, will be rapt by watching a film of this protracted parade of drug snortings and swallowings, particularly when it is presented subjectively through the distorting vision of the two druggies. And how does this hallucinating orgy end? With a quasi-moralistic cop-out. A voice-over chastises Timothy Leary and the example he set because he never gave "a thought to the grim meat-hook realities that were waiting for all the people who took him seriously." So this explosion of abandon tries to finish as a cautionary tale.

Regrets about this film, however, are of two kinds. First, a lot of talent has gone down the drain, an apt term since bathrooms loom in the picture. The cinematography by Nicola Pecorini is unceasingly inventive. Alex McDowell's production designs, particularly his Las Vegas interiors, are sharp graphic satire. And Gilliam himself, tilting his camera most of the time, has imagined skewed compositions and distortions and drugged-out disasters in profusion. But the acting needs no comment, except for Ellen Barkin's brief, bitter appearance as a coffee-shop waitress.

More poignant is the regret about Gilliam's post-Python existence. Bereft of the group that gave him his best being, he doesn't seem able to find an authentic existence on his own.

Beyond Silence (Miramax) is a German film that is more enlightening than it possibly intended to be. The screenplay, cowritten by Beth Serlin and the director, Caroline Link, concerns the daughter of deaf parents. That daughter, Lara, hears normally, has grown up versed in sign language, and often acts as "ears" for her parents. For instance, when she is a child, she sits on the floor in front of the TV set, facing her mother who is watching a film on the set, and the child "signs" the dialogue for her mother. Both when Lara is a child and a late teenager,

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Bulworth. *Warren Beatty stars in, and cowrote and directed, this fireworks display about a U.S. senator who suddenly speaks some truths about race. The transitions are weak, but the material between them is biting and funny. (Reviewed 6/8/98)* **He Got Game.** *About basketball. Though Spike Lee's screenplay is hokey, his directing is fine. And Denzel Washington is at his best. (6/1/98)* **The Horse Whisperer.** *Robert Redford restores the spirits of a child and a horse, both of them in trauma. The story is pleasant, if predictable; Montana, the setting, is magnificent. (6/15/98)* **Wilde.** *Stephen Fry is first-class in this skillful rendering of Oscar's sex life and the trials that resulted from it. (5/18/98)*—**SK**

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the complexities of the situation with her parents, including her need for the rest of the world and their fear of losing her, are seen and treated empathetically.

Extrinsic to the story is another interesting matter revealed by the press notes on the cast. In this film where only German is spoken, an American deaf actor, Howie Seago, plays Lara's father, and Emmanuelle Labrit, a French deaf actress, plays the mother. Apparently there is at least a small international corps of deaf actors who can cross borders just as actors did in the days of silent film.

Pity would be insolent; both Seago and Labrit are competent, appealing professionals. Tatjana Lieb, as the eight-year-old Lara, and Sylvie Testud, as Lara at 18, are lovely. In fact, Testud has one of those nonpretty faces that are so attractive we almost become impatient with prettiness.

All these performances, plus others, reflect the perception of the director. Link shows exceptional gifts in her work with the cast, and she has thus deepened the quality of her film. In theme and synopsis, *Beyond Silence* might sound like a social-problem-of-the-week TV special. But what Link has accomplished with her actors transmutes the film from the didactic into an experience of some warm, engaging people. •

Pat Buchanan and the illusions of protectionism.

Trade Free or Die

BY ROBERT J. SAMUELSON

I.

In many ways, the timing of Pat Buchanan's plea for more protectionism could not be worse. The American economy is humming along, with unemployment around 5 percent since late 1996. If more than two decades of trade deficits have crippled us, the consequences are not immediately obvious. Not only is the economy of the United States now the strongest among advanced societies, but American companies still remain formidable, if not always dominant, competitors in many critical industries: computers and software; aerospace; biotechnology; communications and entertainment; banking and finance; business consulting; and medicine. The auto and steel industries—once given up for dead—have recovered from fierce foreign competition.

The coexistence of extraordinary prosperity and constant trade deficits is a paradox to be explained, but Buchanan ignores it. Reading him, you would not know that the United States is in a mighty boom. The temptation, then, is to dismiss his book as irrelevant. That is not a good idea. An all-but-announced Republican presidential candidate in 2000, Buchanan is a born-again protectionist, who sees his conversion as a harbinger of a broader shift among the public. "The Young Turks of the New Conservatism who would capture the Republican Party for Barry Goldwater in 1964 and Ronald Reagan in 1980 [were] free traders," he writes. "I know, because I was one of them." His hopes of a protectionist revival are not preposterous, regardless of the fate of his own candidacy. In a weakening economy, the message could play. Fears of an overseas job drain can be exploited; and working-class Democrats (Reagan Democrats) can be wooed with promises of greater job security. A populist majority might one day rally to economic nationalism.

Until now, of course, protectionism has been a political flop. Every politician who has tried to ride it to the White House has failed: John Connally in 1980, Richard Gephardt in 1988, Ross Perot in 1992, Pat Buchanan in 1996. It's worth trying to understand why. A common theory is that protectionism does not have much of a constituency. It is good rhetoric, but in the end it does not attract many voters, because not many Americans would benefit from import restrictions, especially if they resulted in retaliation against American exports. The raw numbers seem to confirm this. In 1997, for example, imports equaled only 13 percent of the economy's output, or Gross Domestic Product, and this was nearly offset by exports, 12 percent of GDP. Such figures suggest that protectionism has only a tiny constituency.

Buchanan, by contrast, argues quite plausibly that trade politics must be seen in a broader context, and that the free-trade consensus that arose after World War II has been crumbling for decades. It rested on three pillars, he says, each of them now weakened. The first pillar was a general sense that American industry was invincible; but that confidence shattered in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when many venerable American companies (Ford, Caterpillar, U.S. Steel, Xerox, Intel) came under siege from foreign competition. The second pillar of the postwar period was the cold war: greater trade with our allies promoted their prosperity (it was said), and this inoculated them against communism. The end of the cold war obviously dispensed with this argument. And the third pillar was the once-common belief that protectionism (and the Smoot-Hawley tariff) had been a major cause of the Great Depression. But memories fade, and much modern scholarship discounts protectionism as a major cause of the Depression.

The correct implication is that protectionism could again find a large following. The present optimism of Americans masks a deep uneasiness about the global economy that, once today's boom ends (as it will), could reemerge. We face a collision between an instinctive nationalism and the relentless expansion of global markets. Just because protectionism is not a desirable response does not mean that every protectionist grievance is bogus. Many of its complaints are clearly true: burgeoning global trade and investment do erode national sovereignty and self-sufficiency; and they do threaten some industries and workers; and they do create divided loyalties for American companies between

The Great Betrayal: How American Sovereignty and Social Justice Are Being Sacrificed to the Gods of the Global Economy
by Patrick J. Buchanan
(Little, Brown, 376 pp., $22.95)

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enhancing profits and preserving American jobs.

It would be unnatural if Americans did not worry about these developments. Moreover, the economy's exposure to global competition is greater than the raw trade statistics indicate. In 1997, for example, imports accounted for only about 13 percent of American car and truck sales. But the entire auto industry faces global competition, because imports could capture almost any individual sale; and foreign car firms now produce here. The same is true of many industries. Global competition doesn't yet affect a majority of workers, but its impact—real and psychological—extends beyond an isolated minority.

Polls also find Americans to be ambivalent about trade. A CBS survey in late 1996 asked whether trade was good or bad for the country. The response was that 69 percent said it was good and 17 percent said it was bad. But a *Los Angeles Times* poll a few months earlier asked whether imports should be restricted to "protect American industry and jobs" or rejected "to permit the widest choices and lowest prices." The response: 63 percent favored restrictions, only 28 percent didn't.

It is easy to imagine a recession and a huge trade deficit fueling protectionism. Or a general isolationist drift could infect trade policies. One sign of how weak the free-trade consensus has grown is that the hostility is not confined to one party. Both Democrats and Republicans have protectionist wings. Three decades ago, this was unthinkable. Buchanan's audience is not economists or academics. It is the political class, and the editorial boards, and the opinion-makers. Despite its poor logic, his case has a glib allure. Protectionism has been so disreputable for so long that its opponents have grown complacent. They have not candidly acknowledged possible conflicts between free trade and foreign policy goals. And if they don't wake up, they could lose the argument by default.

II.

One thing is certain: the case for free trade cannot honestly be made on the basis of heritage. The greatest virtue of Buchanan's book is to remind us that America has mostly been a protectionist nation.

The political culture is certainly receptive. The godfather of protectionism was Alexander Hamilton, whose "Report on Manufactures," written in 1791, urged a protective tariff to nurture industry. To Hamilton, American "wealth ... independence and security" depended on "the prosperity" of manufacturing. "Every nation," he argued, "ought to endeavor to possess within itself all the essentials of national supply." The Tariff Act of 1789, which imposed duties of 5 percent on many imports, was the second law passed by Congress. Later tariffs went higher, and they stayed high for most of the nineteenth century. With the exception of slavery, they were the largest source of conflict between North and South.

The Tariff Act of 1828—the Tariff of Abominations—almost triggered secession. It imposed an average duty of 62 percent on 92 percent of the country's imports. The South Carolina legislature subsequently declared it and a revised tariff "null, void." A secessionist crisis was avoided in 1833 only because Congress agreed to reduce the tariff to 20 percent over ten years. In general, the South, a big exporter of cotton and a big importer of manufactured products, detested high tariffs. The North, with a larger manufacturing base, adored them.

One reason that tariffs stayed high was their role as the federal government's main source of revenue for most of the century. (The Civil War was the major exception.) But they were also kept high to protect industry. In the 1830s and 1840s, the Whig Party—headed by Henry Clay—urged national economic development through internal improvements (roads, harbors, bridges) and high tariffs. Lincoln, an early Whig, generally supported high tariffs.

Protectionism was often equated with patriotism. Listen to Justin Morrill, a Republican senator from Vermont who entered Congress as a Whig in 1855, and was among the most steadfast guardians of high tariffs until his death in 1898: "Free trade abjures patriotism and boasts of cosmopolitism. It regards the labor of our own people with no more favor than that of the barbarian on the Danube or the cooly on the Ganges." Buchanan enthuses over such flag-waving. He argues that high tariffs enabled America to become the world's great industrial power in the nineteenth century.

During the last half of the century, many individual tariff rates hovered around 50 percent, and the average tariff (on dutiable and non-dutiable items alike) was about 30 percent. They stayed high partly to repay the huge national debt run up during the Civil War. (The federal debt rose from $65 million in 1860 to $2.8 billion in 1866.) But there were other reasons for the persistence of the tariffs. They were blatant protectionism and fervent nationalism.

A historic reversal was accomplished by Cordell Hull, Roosevelt's secretary of state, who shepherded the Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act of 1934 through Congress. This law transferred much of Congress's power to set tariffs to the president, who could negotiate mutual tariff cuts with other countries. A former senator from Tennessee, Hull had long believed that trade fostered goodwill among nations. And the Depression produced a backlash against protectionism. The backlash continued after World War II. In the 1940s, the United States helped to create new global institutions to prevent the return of '30s protectionism and deflation. These included the International Monetary Fund, which would make short-term loans of foreign exchange, generally dollars, to countries with big trade deficits (the idea was to preempt competitive currency devaluations or protectionism); and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, which would negotiate and police tariff cuts and international trade rules.

Trade also quickly emerged as a central weapon against communism. The Japanese needed to trade to buy basic raw materials (food, fuel, minerals). "Japan cannot remain in the free world unless something is done to allow her to make a living," President Eisenhower said. Otherwise, "it is going to the Communists." For Europe, trade succeeded the Marshall Plan as a recovery strategy from war. In trade negotiations, American officials often made more concessions than they received. In 1954, the State Department proposed unilateral concessions on roughly half of all Japanese imports, from glassware to optical goods to cars. Hardly anyone—the textile, apparel, and shoe industries were major exceptions—felt threatened, because American industry and technology were so dominant.

In 1962, Congress passed John F. Kennedy's Trade Expansion Act, authorizing new trade talks, by huge margins (78–8 in the Senate and 299–125 in the House). As a 23-year-old editorial writer for the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, Buchanan was caught up in the fervor. Passage of the Trade Expansion Act, he wrote, was a "thumping administration triumph" that could "become the most potent cold war weapon in the free Western arsenal...." Although he thinks expanded trade was then justified, he says that Americans went overboard. Free trade is not just an idea, Buchanan argues; it is a false religion that "holds out the promise that if we follow the gospel of free trade, paradise can be created on earth." Buchanan contemptuously quotes the nineteenth-century French economist

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Frederic Bastiat: "Free trade means harmony of interests and peace between nations.... We place this indirect and social effect a thousand times above the direct or purely economic effect."

On this, Buchanan is more clear-eyed than many free-trade enthusiasts. It is true that trade cemented America's cold war alliances, but this does not mean that trade can take us the next step—to universal peace and goodwill. What held the cold war alliance together was the cold war. It is dangerous to generalize from this experience; and a lot of history warns against viewing trade as a shield against war. Before World War I, Germany and Britain were major trading partners. Germany also traded heavily with Russia, Holland, and Belgium—and attacked them all.

Trade does not just bind countries together; it also arouses suspicions. In the 1980s, many Americans wrongly feared that the country would be taken over by the Japanese. Canadians feel constantly assaulted by American trade and culture, and so (to a lesser extent) do Europeans. Nationalism endures and endures; and although the tensions and conflicts rarely end in war, trade is not an automatic pacifier.

III.

What trade has going for it, of course, is economics. The most astonishing thing about Buchanan's book is that, although it is ostensibly about economics, it almost never engages in genuinely economic thinking. For Buchanan, the decision to expand or to restrict trade is mainly a political choice. Thus he ignores lower communications and transportation costs (container ships, transoceanic telephone cables, jets, satellites, and, now, the Internet) as driving forces; and as the cost of doing business across borders goes down, the demand to do business—including political pressures to permit it—goes up.

Neither Buchanan nor anyone else can repeal this relationship. Certainly countries can prevent trade by shutting themselves off from the world (as China did until the late 1970s), but it is harder and harder to do with surgical precision. With trade comes travel, and modern communications, and global finance. Controlling the process has proven arduous even for the countries (such as Japan) most determined to do so.

This is one reason why more and more countries have embraced the global economy across a broad range of industries and activities. The other reason is that the potential economic gains of doing so have become self-evident. Buchanan treats the process mainly as a zero-sum game: one country's gain is another country's loss. If this were true, there would not be much global trade and investment. When losers recognized their losses, they would withdraw. Trade would occur mainly as a consequence of sheer economic necessity—countries importing essential raw materials (fuel, food, minerals) or goods produced only in a few countries (commercial jets, for example); or as a consequence of coercion—the strong compelling the weak to trade on disadvantageous terms, an informal neocolonialism. Otherwise trade would wither.

What is true, of course, is that individual companies or individual workers can lose in trade. General Motors can lose to Toyota; Hitachi can lose to IBM. But what is bad for a company or an industry is not necessarily bad for a country. Moreover, domestic competition causes more job losses than trade. Consider, for example, the job losses counted by the consulting firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas. Between 1993 and 1997, it found almost 2.5 million job cuts by American companies. The top five industries were: aerospace and defense, 270,166; retailing, 256,834; telecommunications, 213,675; computers, 212,033; financial services (banking, brokerage houses), 166,672; and transportation (airlines, trucking companies), 136,008. None of these cuts involved global trade. The causes ranged from defense cutbacks (aerospace) to new technology (computers). But Buchanan wishes to leave the false impression that, but for trade, the economy would be far less turbulent and harsh.

Given Buchanan's ignorance of economics, it is no surprise that his history, too, is badly warped. To suggest that the vast industrialization of the late nineteenth century, and America's rise as the world's most powerful economy, owes a great deal to protectionism is absurd. In the last half of the nineteenth century, the American economy benefited from a virtuous circle. Railroads expanded dramatically. Between 1860 and 1900, the miles of track rose from roughly 30,000 to more than 200,000. Lower transportation costs expanded markets. In turn, this encouraged investment in new manufacturing technologies that lowered costs through economies of scale. Industrial output soared for all manner of consumer goods (clothes, shoes, furniture), for farm implements, for machinery. Larger markets and lower costs fostered new methods of retailing and wholesaling: the mail-order house Sears, Roebuck was founded in 1891.

None of this depended on protection-

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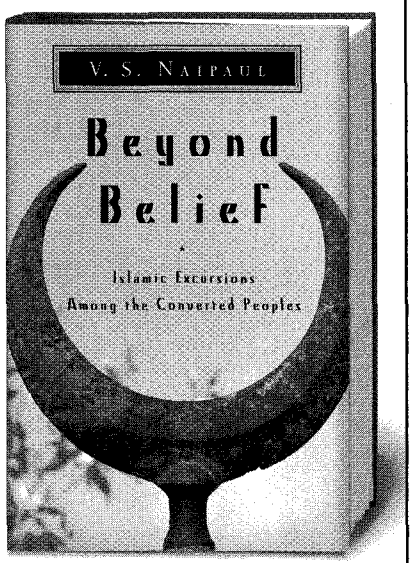

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ism. Some basic technologies (steelmaking, railroads) originated in Europe. And the United States also imported another vital ingredient of growth: people. In each of the century's last four decades, immigration averaged more than 5 percent of the nation's population. As for trade, it grew as the American economy grew. Between 1870 and 1890, both imports and exports almost doubled. The decisive limit on imports was the ability to export (as it is for most countries), not high tariffs.

Tariffs may have protected some American industries, but any effect on the overall economy is exaggerated. Suppose there were no tariffs; some companies might then have faced cheaper imports. To survive, American companies would have had to cut prices; and they could have done so by reducing wages. In this era, wages were what economists call "flexible": employers cut them when they thought that they must or they could. Between 1866 and 1880, annual wages for nonfarm workers actually declined 21 percent. But this did not mean lower living standards, because prices dropped even more. Over the same period, purchasing power for average workers rose 23 percent.

The point is that a country's capacity to achieve economic growth lies mainly in its own people, values, resources, and institutions. Trade supplements this in many ways. The simplest is comparative advantage, as it was classically conceived by David Ricardo. Countries specialize in what they do best, even if one country could produce everything more efficiently than another. Suppose the United States makes both shoes and supercomputers more efficiently than Spain. We need 100 workers to produce either one supercomputer or 1,000 pairs of shoes annually; and Spain needs 1,000 workers to make a supercomputer and 200 workers to make 1,000 pairs of shoes. Total production of computers and shoes will still be greatest if each country concentrates on its strength (shoes for Spain, computers for us) and trades with the other to satisfy its needs: America will have more supercomputers and shoes, and so will Spain.

Much trade of this type occurs. The United States imports shoes, toys, and sporting goods; it exports bulldozers, computers, and corn. Trade's greatest benefits, though, may transcend comparative advantage. Not everyone has to reinvent the wheel or the computer chip. Technologies, products, and management practices that have been developed abroad can be deployed at home. In theory, these gains can occur without a country opening itself to trade. Information can be stolen; products and processes can be imitated. In practice, however, it is much easier if a country is open.

For commercial or technological insight does not derive from a single dazzling flash. It consists in thousands upon thousands of small details. It encompasses how things are made, distributed, sold, financed, repaired, and replaced. The more isolated a country, the harder it is to come by all the details. Whatever its tariff rates, the United States in the nineteenth century was open in this critical sense. Its people traveled freely abroad; immigration was large; merchants were eager traders; and industrialists borrowed ideas from wherever they could.

These same processes also operated after World War II. All countries could (in theory) tap the same international reservoir of technologies, products, and management systems. Yet some countries did better than others, which was a reflection of their practices and policies. Despite mercantilist tendencies, Japan enthusiastically embraced trade; it systematically imported (via licensing agreements) foreign technology; and it routinely studied American management. The combination of high saving and proven investment opportunities propelled great economic growth, averaging about 10 percent a year in the 1960s. Countries that were more shut off (China, the former Soviet bloc, India) fared less well. And only when other Asian societies began imitating Japan did their economic growth accelerate.

This explains why poorer countries should now like trade. It has helped lift millions of people in Europe and Asia from abject poverty. But what's in it for us? Trade can help to erode a country's relative economic superiority, and for the United States it has contributed to such an erosion. As other countries advanced rapidly, our dominance of the early postwar decades was lost. But this history cannot be undone. To preserve our position, we would have needed to be ruthlessly protectionist in the 1950s and 1960s: a policy that deliberately aimed to restrain the economic progress of Europe and Japan. But this would have been unwise, and even Buchanan does not contend otherwise. To long for our superiority of the 1940s is an exercise in nostalgia. Still, what is not true, then or now, is that trade impoverishes us. It is not depressing our living standards. It is elevating them. Trade may enable poorer nations to catch up, or to grow faster than we do; but this does not cause us to slow down. It is not a zero-sum game. We gain, too.

Competition is one way. Many countries now make and trade the same things, so comparative advantage doesn't really apply. Japan makes and trades cars, computer chips, and telephone switching centers; and so do the United States and Germany. The result is bigger markets that enable efficient producers to achieve greater economies of scale by spreading costs across more buyers. Prices to consumers drop. Boeing, Microsoft, and Caterpillar all have lower unit costs because they are selling to a world market. Domestic competition also intensifies. Imports compel domestic rivals to improve. Chevrolets and Chryslers are now better and more efficiently made because Americans can buy Toyotas and Hondas. In many industries—cars, copying machines, and machine tools, to name a few—American firms and workers have had to adapt to the best foreign practices and technologies.

What haunts free trade is the specter that all production will flow to low-wage countries. Yet this does not happen, for two reasons. First, low-wage workers in poor countries are usually less productive than well-paid workers in rich countries. In 1995, Malaysian wages were almost 10 percent of American wages; but the productivity of Malaysian workers (output per hour worked) was also about 10 percent of American levels, according to Stephen Golub of Swarthmore College. Companies shift production abroad, Golub maintains, only when relative productivity exceeds relative wages. If Malaysians earn and produce 90 percent less, there is no advantage in moving to Malaysia.

Second, when developing countries export, they earn foreign exchange (mostly dollars) to import—and do so. The global market for pharmaceuticals and software could not exist without the global market for shoes and shirts. In practice, developing countries' trade with advanced countries is fairly balanced, whether in deficit or surplus, as the table below shows. It gives developing countries' manufacturing trade with advanced countries as a share of their GDP. (The data is from Golub.)

Trade With Advanced Countries
1995 Percent of GDP

	Exports	Imports	Balance
Brazil	1.7	3.1	-1.4
China	8.8	7.7	+1.1
India	3.8	3.3	+0.5
Indonesia	6.4	8.7	-2.2
Korea	12.3	13.9	-1.6
Mexico	19.3	16.8	+2.5

On economic grounds, then, the case against trade is puny. Gains dwarf losses. Still, the puzzle remains: If trade is good

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for us, why do we run massive trade deficits? We must (it seems) be doing something wrong if we regularly import more than we export. Well, we aren't. The explanation is that our trade accounts are incomplete. They omit a major American export which—if it were included in the reckoning—would bring our trade flows closer to balance. That American export is money.

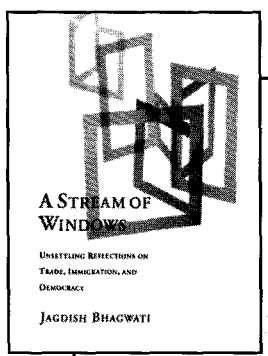
The dollar serves as the world's major money: a means of exchange, a store of value. It is used to conduct trade and to make investments. In 1996, countries kept 59 percent of their official foreign exchange reserve in dollars; the next largest reserve currency was the German mark at 14 percent. Multinational companies keep accounts in dollars. So do wealthy individuals. In some countries, where people distrust the local money, dollars circulate as a parallel currency to conduct everyday business. Indeed, the Federal Reserve estimates that more paper dollars (the folding stuff) exist outside the United States than inside.

The United States provides the world a service, in the form of a fairly stable currency. To pay for this service, the world sends us imports. It is a good deal for us: every year Americans buy 1 or 2 percent more than we produce. This is the size of our current account deficit, a measure of trade and other current overseas flows (such as tourism and freight).

The concept here is the old idea of seigniorage: the profit that a government earns when it can produce money at a cost less than its face value. If a government can print a dollar for 5 cents, it reaps a 95 cent windfall when it spends that dollar. Similarly, the United States reaps a windfall when the world uses our money. The transfer occurs through the exchange rate; the world's demand for dollars holds the dollar's exchange rate high enough so that we do not balance our visible trade. (A high exchange rate makes imports cheaper and exports more expensive.) But for many reasons—intellectual laziness, theoretical messiness—most economists have not applied seigniorage to the world economy.

That is too bad. If they did, we would see that the trade debate's main symbol—the nagging trade deficit—does not symbolize what it is supposed to symbolize. It does not show that we are becoming "uncompetitive," or that we are "deindustrializing," or that we are "losing jobs" abroad. In any single year, shifts in the trade balance may reflect temporary factors. Stronger or weaker growth abroad will affect demand for our exports; stronger or weaker growth here will affect our demand for imports. Changes in technology or exchange rates may alter trade flows in particular industries and products. Yet the continuous trade deficits of the United States do not reflect any of these things. They reflect the world's demand for dollars. Perhaps that demand will someday abate (Europe's single currency, the euro, may provide an alternative global money); and if it does, the American trade account will swing closer to balance. For now, though, it is virtually condemned to deficit.

If we acknowledged this, much of the present trade debate would disappear, because the presumed goal of a "good" trade policy—a trade balance or a trade surplus—would be seen as unrealistic and probably undesirable. Instead, the debate over the economics of trade is simplistic and distorted. The supporters of free trade claim that it creates jobs; the opponents of free trade claim that it destroys jobs. Although both are true for individual workers and industries, they are usually not true for the economy as a whole. We could have "full employment" if we didn't trade at all; and in a workforce of nearly 140 million people, the number of net jobs affected by trade (jobs created by exports minus jobs lost to imports) is tiny. Trade's true advantage is that it raises living standards.



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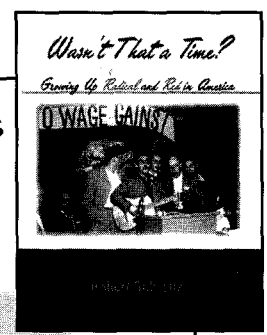

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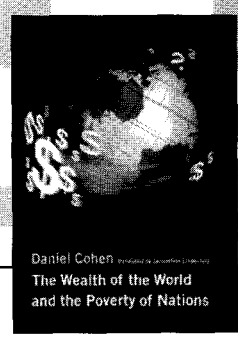

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IV.

The trouble is that the trade debate should concern more than wages or jobs. Buchanan's political appeal lies in his unabashed nationalism, and he is correct that we do not trade for the benefit of the British or the Brazilians or the Chinese. Trade needs to be connected to larger national purposes, and free-traders have grown lax about making such a connection. They are too eager to reduce the debate to a technical dispute over economic gain and loss. Although Buchanan engages in the same exercise—and reaches the wrong conclusion—he is much more willing to cast trade in terms of advancing broader American interests, preserving our national identity, and maintaining our moral values. A lot of this patriotic chest-thumping is nothing more than rhetorical flourish. And yet Buchanan is actually onto something.

Since World War II, American trade policy has made two central assumptions. The first, inherited from the Depression, is that protectionism destabilizes the world economy and that free trade stabilizes it. The second is that free trade enhances American security interests. Both notions were once right, but times have changed. Matters are now more ambiguous. A big outbreak of protectionism would still harm the world economy. Too much economic activity depends on trade for it to be cut painlessly. Yet deepening economic ties among countries—"globalization"—may also create instability. As for trade and security, they were fused by the cold war. Our main trading partners were military allies, and they generally embraced democratic values. Now trade has spread to some countries that do not share our values and to some countries that one day might be adversaries (China and Russia, most obviously).

What has gradually disintegrated is the postwar convergence among economic, strategic, and moral interests. Global economics has raced well ahead of global politics, creating potentially dangerous instabilities that are only barely perceived and may not be easily subdued. Commercial interests may increasingly conflict with security interests or moral values. If we decide, for whatever reason, not to trade with India or China, other countries will probably fill the void. The possibility is hardly theoretical. After India's recent nuclear tests, the United States immediately imposed sanctions; but most other countries—Japan was an exception—did not. There are other examples, involving Iran, Libya, and Cuba. Commercial rivalries can undermine security alliances: If our "allies" aid our "adversaries," are they truly our allies?

The very expansion of global commerce has also raised economic interdependence to a new level. Until now, the "world economy" has been viewed less as an organic whole than as the sum of its parts. It is the collective consequence of individual economies whose performance (though affected by trade) mainly reflects their own strengths and weaknesses. This may still be true, but it is less so. The growing connections among nations—through trade, financial markets, computer systems, people flows—may be creating an independent beast whose behavior affects everyone and is not easily controlled by anyone. Asia's economic crisis is surely testing the notion that growing "globalization" can boomerang. South Korea, Thailand, and Indonesia all borrowed too much abroad; Japanese, European, and American banks lent too much. Excesses went unchecked by either local or international governmental supervision. Economic growth in all these countries has now plunged. There are spillover effects, and this could portend future crises.

Protectionism's best case is that it might insulate us against potential global instability. We would sacrifice somewhat higher living standards for somewhat greater tranquility. But this is not what protectionists have in mind; and if it were, it would be hard—maybe impossible—to achieve.

Consider Buchanan's program. He would impose sliding tariffs on countries reflecting his likes and dislikes. Europe would be hit with a 15 percent tariff; Canada would be spared if it adopted our tariffs (otherwise foreign goods would pour into the United States via Canada). Aside from a 15 percent tariff, Japan would have to end its trade surplus or face tariffs that would do so. Poorer countries would face an "equalization" tariff to offset their lower wages (such tariffs could go to 90 or 95 percent).

The result, Buchanan says, would be "millions of high-paying manufacturing jobs for all our workers—immigrant and native-born, black and white, Hispanic and Asian— ... and trade and budget surpluses as American workers find higher-paying jobs and contribute more to Social Security and Medicare, deficit reduction and tax reduction." Well, not exactly. If the program worked as planned, it would repatriate low-wage jobs making toys and textiles and eliminate high-wage jobs making planes and bulldozers. Overseas markets for American exports would shrink, because countries that could not sell to us could not buy from us. And it is extremely doubtful that Buchanan's program would work as planned. He ignores floating exchange rates: if we raise tariffs by 15 percent, other countries' currencies may fall by 15 percent, leaving import prices unchanged.

Moreover, anything like Buchanan's plan might also create so much uncertainty that it would depress global economic growth. Companies might not invest in the United States—to make toys or textiles—because they could not be sure that high tariffs would not be repealed or neutralized by exchange rates. Yet companies might not invest elsewhere, because they could not know whether the tariffs might work or, if they did not work, whether they might inspire higher tariffs. All countries would suffer from lower investment and growth.

The point is that global commerce has become so widespread that it cannot be wrenched apart, short of some calamity. It is increasingly hard to find major American companies (trucking firms, railroads, or electric utilities, perhaps) that do not have major overseas stakes, either through trade or investment. Coca-Cola sells 70 percent of its beverages outside North America; McDonald's has almost half its 23,000 outlets in foreign countries; Intel derives 56 percent of its revenues abroad. The quest for global markets is one of the economic hallmarks of our times. The recent announcement of the Chrysler/Daimler-Benz merger emphasizes the point. To the extent that people like Buchanan try to frustrate it, they will simply inspire more ingenious—and probably more inefficient—ways for companies and investors to try to evade new barriers.

Even more daunting is the inclusion in the global trading system of countries that do not qualify as either allies or adversaries. We are, in effect, taking a colossal gamble that our commitment to greater trade will turn out for the best. This gamble rests on two pious hopes. The first is that trade, by tying countries closer to each other, diminishes or eliminates the prospect of war among them. Countries that trade are too interdependent to take up arms against each other. Again, Buchanan is properly skeptical of this; what he might also have said is that we could be far more threatened by a modernized China or Russia than by countries that exist in self-imposed economic isolation. One obvious aim of Chinese trade is to transform its military into a world-class force. In theory, American policy prohibits the export of potentially defense-related technology. In practice, controlling "dual use" technologies (those that have both civilian and military applications) was difficult

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even in the cold war. It is much more so now.

The other (related) pious hope is that greater trade abets prosperity, and that the entire process builds a new middle class, which in turn leads to the triumph of democracy and respect for individual liberties. As nations become more like us, the dogma says, they will be less antagonistic. In some countries, this has happened. Yet surely there is no logical or mechanical connection between growing trade and the creation of genuine democracies. Political progress does not automatically follow economic progress. A less inviting possibility is that rapid economic growth will subvert traditional political and social systems without immediately creating viable, open alternatives. Nor is it inevitable that all democracies will be friendly with each other. Americans too easily think—this erroneous assumption has characterized all recent administrations, from Reagan to Clinton—that we can find a formula for cloning our beliefs and our institutions in foreign cultures.

None of this seems to matter much now. The world is generally at peace. America is prosperous. People easily overlook the contradictions and the inconsistencies. Yet these abound and, in more stressful times, they could bubble to the surface. The more countries blend economically, the more their values and their political systems collide. What we consider normal and desirable, other countries often consider abnormal and undesirable. To some extent, differences will persist: if McDonald's wants to do business in Russia, it will have to conform to Russia's laws and customs. But to some extent, differences will erode: if Russia wants McDonald's, it will have to accommodate that company's needs and demands. How are these conflicts to be mediated? And, if the world economy is becoming an organic whole, how are collective problems or crises to be prevented or mitigated?

The answers are not obvious. Except in the crudest sense, a market is not just the meeting place of buyer and seller. It is a framework to conduct ongoing business. It is a political, social, and cultural phenomenon, as well as an economic one. It requires laws, customs, and understandings to foster the certainty that is needed for investors and enterprises to risk capital and to make forward commitments. A market is a system to deal with common conflicts. All nations build market frameworks, for better or worse. A global economy requires its counterpart. Not surprisingly, then, more global commerce has meant more global rules. These now apply, in some form, to banking, insurance, communications, air travel, government procurement, copyright protection (for everything from CDs to software), the environment, and health and safety.

These rules go well beyond the standard stuff of trade policy: tariffs and quotas. Not surprisingly, Buchanan attaches an inflammatory label to this process. He calls it world government. But the label is accurate. We are haphazardly building a crude world government, in a fragmented and piecemeal fashion. To flourish, the world economy probably needs more of it. There are many ideas. One recent proposal would create global accounting standards so that investors can more easily compare companies across borders. Much of this makes economic sense, and the United States has led the process. We have urged global rules to "open up markets," curb industrial subsidies (which might hurt our companies), and make government procedures more "transparent" (to limit discrimination against our firms).

Not surprisingly, many countries resent these rules as intrusions, as violations of their sovereignty. We are (it is said) trying to Americanize the world, to foist our values and our institutions on others. Interestingly, many Americans also deplore the process, because even though we have taken the lead in crafting these new global conventions, we don't run them unilaterally. We are (it is said) surrendering our sovereignty to global bureaucrats.

And indeed we are. Here is the nub of the matter. The ultimate promise of ever-greater global commerce is a universal contentment based on a spreading addiction to material well-being. Prosperity has a tranquilizing effect. It dulls the dangers of undiluted nationalism. People increasingly lead the same lifestyles: drinking Coke, driving Toyotas, conversing on the Internet. All this numbs national differences and permits a growing overlay of international agencies and authorities needed to regulate the global economy. Countries see that they have a common stake in cooperation. There are disagreements and conflicts, to be sure, but they are small-time, and they substitute for larger human tragedies of war and poverty.

This is the underlying moral logic that justifies the commercialization of the world, though hardly anyone puts it quite so forthrightly. It is a seductive vision that can draw much inspiration from the experience of the last half-century. Over this period, the world economy has been a spectacular success.

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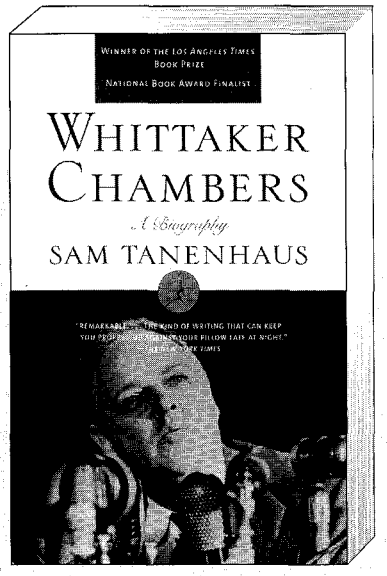

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It has helped power an enormous advance in human well-being. Free trade has triumphed to an extent that hardly anyone could have foreseen at the end of World War II.

In the end, however, the vision is almost certainly false. Just because people watch the same movies and eat at the same fast-food outlets does not mean that they have been homogenized. National identities are not so easily retired. For good and ill, ethnic and religious differences show a remarkable ability to survive the march of material progress. National affections and animosities endure; and combined with the terrible and unpredictable potential of modern technology, they preserve humankind's capacity for ordinary trouble and unimaginable tragedy.

The world is fusing economically more than it is fusing (or will ever fuse) politically. We have created a system that requires ever-greater amounts of global cooperation, because it generates new and unfamiliar forms of international conflicts. One day, perhaps, the irresistible force of world markets may meet the immovable object of nationalism. Protectionism and isolationism are not so much agendas as moods, and countries—including the United States—might react to domestic disruption and international disorder by blaming foreigners and trying to withdraw from a global system on which most nations now increasingly depend. Buchanan has inadvertently identified the dilemma, but he has done exactly nothing to resolve it. •

Fear and Loathing in Antiquity

By Bernard Knox

Judeophobia: Attitudes toward the Jews in the Ancient World by Peter Schäfer

(Harvard University Press, 306 pp., $35)

The word "anti-Semitism" has a history very much shorter than the phenomenon it describes. It seems to have been invented in 1879 by a German agitator named Wilhelm Marr, who in that year founded the *AntiSemiten-Lega*, the League of Anti-Semites. It is a wildly inaccurate term for the attitude that it defines, since "Semitic" is a linguistic qualification and not a racial one, and the Semitic languages include Arabic as well as Hebrew. Peter Schäfer's adoption of the word "Judeophobia" for the title of his important book is not a suggested replacement for the current term; it is chosen, rather, because the Greek word *phobia* means both hatred and fear—a combination of emotions that Schäfer finds characteristic of the ancient, pre-Christian anti-Semitism that is the subject of his book.

Schäfer is University Professor of Jewish Studies and Director of the *Institut für Judaistik* at the Freie Universität in Berlin, and he is fully conscious of the novelty of such a station in the heart of Germany. He was given a sudden reminder of the tenacity of older attitudes when he typed on his computer (an American product) the word *Judenfreundlich*, or "friendly toward Jews." The spelling check highlighted it, suggesting a correction: *Judenfeindlich*, or "hostile toward Jews." "At first," he writes, "I was convinced I had spotted a little anti-Semite inside my computer ... but, of course, the reality is less dramatic and yet highly significant for our subject." Obviously the German dictionary implanted in the computer did not have the word *Judenfreundlich* in its listings and suggested a similar one that it did have. The substitution was "a sophisticated judgement about the German language and the attitude toward the Jews expressed by it: the word *Judenfreundlich* does not exist because Germans never have been, and never are, friendly toward the Jews. Nothing could illuminate better the terrain on which a German author writing on anti-Semitism, even if only on the 'remote' history of ancient anti-Semitism, must tread."

But tread it Schäfer does, and to brilliant effect. His book casts new light on, and suggests a new understanding of, an area that has been a controversial field ever since Theodor Mommsen, in the chapter on Judea and the Jews in the fifth volume of his *Römische Geschichte* in 1884, made the "rather casual statement" that "hatred of Jews and Jew-baiting (*Judenhetzen*) are as old as the Diaspora itself." And this time around Schäfer had no interference from his computer, on which he has written his book in elegant and effective English.

The literary evidence for ancient anti-Semitism, which Schäfer discusses in the first and the longest section of the book, is written in Greek and Latin. It ranges in date from around 300 BC, when Hecataeus of Abdera wrote his book on Egypt, to the opening decades of the second century AD, which saw the publication of the *Histories* of Tacitus and the *Satires* of Juvenal. Many of the earlier sources are problematical, to say the least. We do not have Hecataeus's book, only excerpts from it found in later writers. The passage dealing with the Exodus, for example, comes from a work by Diodorus of Sicily, a history of the world from the earliest times to Julius Caesar's war in Gaul, which began in 58 BC; yet the fortieth book of Diodorus's work, from which our excerpt comes, has not survived either, and we have the text only in the *Bibliotheca* of Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople in the ninth century AD.

The possibility of erroneous citation is obviously not to be dismissed, and in any case ancient authors are notoriously inaccurate in their quotations of others. Often they are clearly citing from memory. This is not surprising, given the form of the ancient book: a papyrus roll that makes checking references an awkward and time-consuming business. And quite aside from the possibility of error, there were no institutional or legal obstacles, in the ancient world, to deliberate distortion: no publishers, no conception of copyright. The account of the Exodus written in Greek by the Egyptian priest Manetho, for example, exists in two different versions (both are cited by Josephus) that are so contradictory that scholars assign one to Manetho and the other to a ghostly Pseudo-Manetho.

Still, in both Manetho and Pseudo-Manetho—and in all other Greek and Roman accounts of the Exodus, with the single exception of Strabo, a Greek geographer writing early in the first century BC—there is agreement on one all-important point: that the Jews did not leave Egypt of their own free will. They were, instead, expelled by the Egyptians—as lepers, as polluters responsible for the plague because of their alien religious practices, or as invaders or the agents of invaders. Even in accounts that are in many respects favorable to the Jews, such as Hecataeus, the expulsion motif appears. Hecataeus even goes on to say that as a consequence of their expulsion Moses introduced a way of life "anti-social and hostile to foreigners."

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Later sources amplify this charge of Jewish exclusiveness: the word *misanthropia* ("hatred of mankind") is coupled with the word *misoxenia* ("hatred of foreigners"), and the Jewish refusal to join in communal sacrifice is labeled "impiety."

The latest discussion of the Exodus is that of the Roman historian Tacitus; it is part of his ethnographic excursus on the Jews in the fifth book of his *Histories*—a preliminary to his description of the siege and the capture of Jerusalem in 70 AD. "Since I am now about to describe the last days of a famous city," he begins, "it seems appropriate to explain its origins." His account of the Exodus contains a highly respectful, almost admiring characterization of Jewish monotheism as "a purely mental conception of the divinity as one ... a being supreme and everlasting, that cannot be represented by images"; but it also adopts, in Schäfer's account, "both the impiety and the *misanthropia* motifs" to produce "a summary of the mainstream Greco-Egyptian tradition starting with Hecataeus. Through him it has become the common property of Western civilization."

This tradition begins with a Greek, Hecataeus, who, like Herodotus long before him, gathered his information in Egypt and was dependent on Egyptian sources. And Manetho, though he wrote in Greek, was an Egyptian priest. After his chapter on the Exodus, Schäfer goes on to establish the same origin for many of the pagan attitudes toward the differences in belief and custom that distinguished the Jews from their neighbors. He begins with the "notion of one god who is unique and by definition excludes the possibility of other gods besides him," a notion "mediated to us by a wide range of reactions: from admiration through curiosity and amazement to disapproval and satirical contempt."

Hecataeus's description of Jewish beliefs "sounds, in itself, sympathetic," but it is embedded in a derogatory context which suggests that these beliefs are responsible for a way of life "somewhat unsocial and hostile to foreigners." Later Greek assessments become more openly hostile: allegations of ass-worship, human sacrifice, and ritual cannibalism. These charges appear in the work of Apion, an Alexandrian writer of the first century AD, who is "the spokesman and in a way the climax of an ancient Egyptian anti-Jewish tradition."

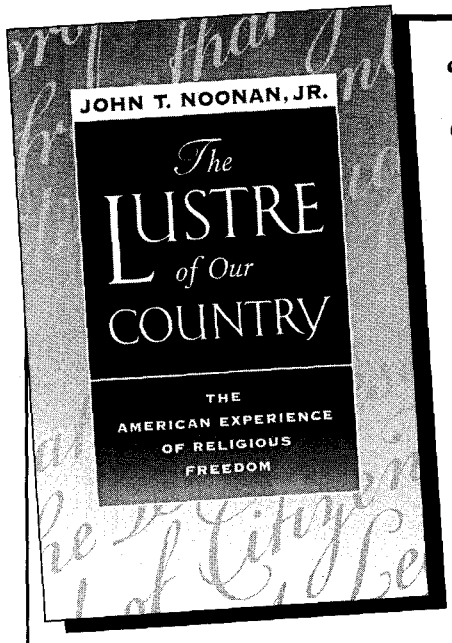
The theme of Jewish abstention from pork, however, "is remarkably free from anti-Jewish polemic," and in some cases it "is openly sympathetic." But in its earliest occurrence—a quotation by Josephus from an unidentified Greek author on the anti-Jewish decrees passed by the Hellenistic ruler Antiochus IV in 167 BC—the abstention from pork is included in the list of Jewish practices that the king decided to outlaw because he was shocked by the Jews' "hatred directed against all mankind." It is an echo of the original Egyptian themes: *misanthropia, misoxenia.*

The hostile pagan reaction to the observance of the Sabbath, however, seems to owe nothing to Egyptian sources, though one Greek author, Agatharchides, writing in the second century BC, calls it "madness" and something that distinguishes the Jews "from the entire world." The Greco-Roman abhorrence of circumcision, too, can hardly be an inheritance from the Egyptians, since, according to Herodotus, it was an Egyptian custom. And the gentile reaction to Jewish "proselytism" (though it is not always clear whether the texts refer to Jewish missionary activity or to voluntary conversion of pagan sympathizers) is documented only for Rome.

The main charges against the Jews, of hatred of foreigners and impiety, can be traced back to Hecataeus and Manetho, and reappear in the Greek polemic accounts of the anti-Jewish riots that took place in Alexandria in 38 AD, an outbreak of savagery that is usually identified as the first manifestation of anti-Semitic violence. But these riots have a precedent. "The first recorded event in Jewish history which may be understood as an outbreak of anti-Jewish feeling took place in the Egyptian military colony at Elephantine" in 410 BC. Elephantine (its modern name is Geserit Assuan) is an island in the Nile opposite Aswan, at the southern border of Egypt; in Pharaonic times it was a garrison post controlling the frontier with Nubia.

In the final years of the nineteenth century, excavations on the island produced an archive of papyrus documents written in Aramaic that revealed the existence of a Jewish military community. It is generally agreed that they were first established there around 650 BC, but the documents refer to things that happened in 419 and 410 BC. At that time Egypt had been a satrapy of the Persian empire for more than a hundred years, and the Jewish garrison was in the service of the Persian king. In fact, during the unsuccessful Egyptian revolt against Persian rule after the death of Artaxerxes I in 425, the Jewish garrison sided with the Persians; one of the papyri records their claim that "we did not leave our posts."

This was obviously one source of tension between Egyptian and Jew, a



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tension reflected in a document dated 419, which is known as the Passover Letter. Like most papyri, it has not survived intact; at a great many places scholarly guesses at the missing letters have to be made, and different interpretations have emerged. Schäfer follows a reconstruction which gives us a letter from an official addressed to the local Persian governor, telling him to "keep away from the Jewish garrison," and following this up with instructions about the celebration of Passover. The reason for the order to the governor is presumed to be the possibility of Egyptian disruption of the Jewish rites; they had a temple of the Egyptian ram-god Khnum on the island and may have considered the sacrifice of the Paschal lamb an affront to their deity.

Whatever the truth may be—and the essential words "keep away..." are a conjectural supplement for a gap in the papyrus—it is quite certain that nine years later the Jewish temple was destroyed by Egyptian troops, an action instigated by the priests of Khnum. A letter from the Jewish community to Bagohi, the governor of Judah, informs him that "they came to the fortress of Elephantine with their weapons, broke into that Temple, demolished it to the ground, and the stone pillars which were there—they smashed them. But the gold and silver basins and (other) things that were in that Temple—all (of these) they took...." A later memorandum from Bagohi orders that the "altar-house of the God of Heaven" be rebuilt "on its site as it was formerly," and authorizes the "meal-offering and the incense upon that altar just as formerly was done." The sacrifice of the lamb is not mentioned. The Persian government imposes a compromise, which (other documents suggest) may have been proposed by the Jews themselves.

The details are obscure and controversial. What is important, Schäfer observes, is that "the first time in history that an anti-Jewish outburst becomes evident is at about 410 BC in the colony of Elephantine, that is, almost precisely 450 years before the riots in Alexandria. It is not the Egyptian-Greek city of Alexandria which is the mother of 'anti-Semitism' but the very heart of Egypt itself." Also important is the fact that in Elephantine "what expresses itself most forcefully ... is an Egyptian nationalism, nourished by religious sentiments, which is directed against the foreign oppressors and their Jewish 'collaborators.'"

When, in August 38 AD, the Greek and Egyptian inhabitants of Alexandria turned against their Jewish neighbors in murderous riots, their fury seems to have been fuelled by the same explosive combination of religious and nationalist fanaticism. For the Alexandrian Jews had supported Julius Caesar in his Egyptian campaign of 48–47 BC, and when Egypt became a Roman province in 31, they were seen as "collaborators." This was not the only political prejudice at work. It seems fairly certain, though the documentary evidence can be interpreted in various ways, that the Jewish inhabitants of Alexandria had been agitating for full citizenship rights—a demand fiercely resisted by both Greeks and Egyptians.

Schäfer discusses at length, though only to reject it, a recent scholarly article that sees the riots of 38 AD as motivated not by "basic cultural-religious contrasts," but by a "situation of concrete political competition," and that draws the conclusion that "anti-Semitism is the consequence, not the cause, of tension in Alexandria." As Schäfer points out, the distinction between "politics" and "culture/religion" is untenable for the ancient world. There is also the Egyptian role in the riots to consider. When Philo, our main authority for the events of 38, speaks of the Egyptians' "ancient, and we might say innate, hostility to the Jews," the authors of the article contested by Schäfer maintain that Philo means the Greeks. "Cultural-religious and political aspects," Schäfer concludes, "were inextricably interwoven in the conflict in Alexandria, and it is precisely this amalgam of political goals and (mainly) Egyptian hatred of the Jews which makes it unique and may allow us to speak of Alexandrian anti-Semitism."

There is another theory of the origin of anti-Semitism: that it first appears in the second century BC in Syria-Palestine, where the Hellenistic monarch Antiochus IV, in 167 BC, attempted to force Hellenization on the Jews, a program that culminated in a sacrifice to Zeus on a pagan altar erected in the Temple at Jerusalem. His actions provoked the successful Maccabean revolt and the establishment of a Jewish state, which pursued an expansionist policy. This, as Schäfer summarizes the theory, "was the decisive trigger to release anti-Jewish sentiments on the part of the Greek populace." One proponent of this theory declares flatly that "there is no anti-Jewish passage in Greek literature before the Maccabean struggle, nor any recorded anti-Jewish action." This statement clearly ignores the destruction of the Temple at Elephantine, and it also fails to mention that many of the anti-Jewish propaganda themes of Greek writers of the second century BC—the expulsion of the Jews from Egypt as lepers, their worship of an ass in the Temple, their human sacrifices—have much earlier origins: "in Hellenistic Egypt, in an atmosphere hostile to Jews."

Roman anti-Semitism was a more complicated phenomenon than its Greco-Egyptian predecessor. Roman religion, with its rituals of communal sacrifice and its rich calendar of festivals and anniversaries, was so basic an element of the political life of the Roman citizen that Jewish denizens of Rome must have been conspicuous by their abstention. The Roman Senate was in any case suspicious of foreign cults; in 186 BC it suppressed, with drastic measures, the Greek cult of Bacchus, which had become fairly widespread in southern Italy. In 137 BC, Jews were expelled from Rome, but they returned, as is clear from a speech that Cicero delivered in 59 BC. He complained about the "barbaric superstition" of Jews, and denounced "the crowd of Jews that on occasion set our public meetings ablaze": the Jews in Rome have become a political pressure group as well as an alien element.

Varro, a contemporary of Cicero, has a uniquely favorable opinion of the Jews; he believes that the Jewish concept of a god who could not be represented by images corresponds to original Roman beliefs which have over the years been replaced by superstition. But there was another expulsion in 19 AD under Tiberius, which seems to have been motivated by the spread of conversions to the Jewish religion, a process that was evidently not interrupted by the expulsion, for not many years later Seneca complains that "the customs of this accursed people have gained such influence that they are now received throughout the world.... The vanquished have given laws to their victors." And Tacitus, too, in his excursus on the Jews, "personifies most palpably the fear of the Roman upper class that the Jews might succeed despite their political defeat...."

"The Roman attitude toward the Jews," Schäfer sums up, "is much more complex than the Greek and, especially, the Egyptian. The Romans inherited and absorbed, no doubt, to a certain degree the blunt Egyptian hatred and the Greek contempt for the outcasts of humankind. In addition, however, they sensed an appeal to which they reacted either with sympathy and, indeed, conversion or with fear, dislike, and, indeed, hatred...." It is this combination of fear and hatred that justifies, in Schäfer's view, the use of the term "Judeophobia" to characterize "the peculiarity of the Roman attitude." He sees the "very essence of Roman hostility against Jews"

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in "the deeply felt threat that the Jewish superstition might succeed in finally destroying the cultural and religious values of Roman society." And, as he puts it in the final paragraph of this learned and absorbing book, "this fear was well-founded. The vanquished did succeed in giving laws to their victors: at first as Jews and later, and most effectively, in the guise of Christianity." They lost and they won. When the Roman emperor Julian, who had made a determined effort to re-establish the pagan cults, died in 363 AD, his last words were *Vicisti, Galilaee,* or "You have won, Galilean."

BERNARD KNOX is the author of *The Oldest Dead White European Males* (Norton).

Sourpuss Eidolon

BY SRIKANTH REDDY

Canaan
by Geoffrey Hill

(Houghton Mifflin, 76 pp., $22)

Despair has an eloquence that poets often find irresistible. Bleak cadences have charmed writers from Thomas Gray to Philip Larkin, and we half-expect our modern poets' biographies to end in solitude, depression, or suicide. Spenser was wise to the lyric appeal of nullity; in *The Faerie Queene,* "Despair" comes to life as a Bible-thumping monster whose words drive heroes to end their own lives. Like our common moments of hopelessness, Spenser's Despair speaks with a seductive, deadly rhetoric, luring the poem's Redcrosse Knight toward resignation and self-defeat:

> ...nought but death before his eyes he saw,
> And ever burning wrath before him laid,
> By righteous sentence of th'Almighties law.

To many modern readers, this despondent vision may seem archaic, phrased in a shrill Puritanism; but it is not so far from the grim tones that we find in Geoffrey Hill's latest collection of poems. Hill has obsessively courted the varied aspects of despair over five decades and six collections of work. Religious futility, a frustration with history, and deep skepticism about poetic truth have always colored his writing; at best, this poet offers a dark promise for his craft. As early as a 1959 interview, Hill described the poetic vocation in typically bleak terms: "The poet's job is to define and yet again define. If the poet doesn't make certain horrors appear horrible, who will?"

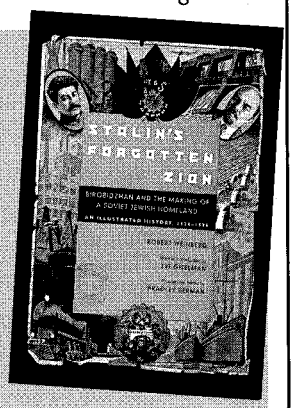
This creed may speak to some readers of poetry, but to other minds it only admits a partial view of lyric possibility, shut off from the ecstatic and vital moments of human experience. Hill's is basically a sourpuss aesthetic, despite all its intensity and erudition. Nobody will deny a poet's duty to give voice to horrors and injustice; but can't we also ask for a generosity of spirit to make hopelessness resonant? Many American readers will find that, like Spenser's Redcrosse Knight, Geoffrey Hill has been seduced too easily by the eloquence—and not by the truth—of despair.

Now, at 65, Hill has written an ambitious book whose political outrage, elaborate historical armature, and Old Testament accents are meant to serve not only as a summation of his own poetic career, but as a hopeless portrait of millennial England as well. The doomed biblical land of the Philistines provides both a title and a master metaphor for the volume; Hill calls his Britain a twentieth-century "Canaan," proposing a disconcerting countermyth to Blake's vision of London as a future Jerusalem. This world of Canaan is filled with brooding auguries for an England "come the millennium," when the national destiny will be

> judged by the ill-fitted,
> the narrow oblong-
> sutured jaws of knee-
> puppets jerked to riposte....

Readers familiar with Hill's work will notice a sharpened tone of political invective in these lines. In *Canaan,* the poet's frustration with contemporary political life finds voice again and again through invective, the discourse of impotent disgust. Hill may be making a bid to join the strong tradition in English verse of poets giving advice on matters of state, a line sponsored by Milton, Blake,

"An important and exciting rediscovery of an almost forgotten Jewish experience."
—George Mosse



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and Shelley. (He does not simply invite us to read *Canaan* with these poets in mind; rather, he insists that we do.) Yet this seems to me a misguided effort. Hill lacks the largesse of these writers, the imaginative heroism with which Milton writes *Areopagitica* in the face of Parliamentary censorship and *Paradise Regained* amid blindness and poverty.

It is Hill's constant allusion and appeal to the giants of literary history that one finds most self-defeating in this volume. We cannot read his poetry without referring back to writers like Blake and Milton, yet at the same time, this relentless comparison exposes the limitations in Hill's vision. Allusion may broaden the scope and range of a poem, but it can also be a risky wager with tradition. Unfortunately, Hill is at his most maddeningly allusive in *Canaan*, endlessly referring to obscure historical figures, untranslated texts, and even the Latin marginalia in John Colet's copy of Marsilio Ficino's *Epistolae*. Those readers who are rusty on their fourth declension may find it difficult to follow the long sequence "Psalms of Assize," as Hill has neglected to make available a translation of the poem's seven Latin epigraphs. The references in *Canaan* are worn like medieval armor: unwieldy, defensive, unbecoming, and obsolete.

Hill's ideas about English national identity seem antique as well. Here, the poet aligns himself with the biblical prophets of doom, Ezekiel and Amos, railing against modernity and a British state inhabited by "a spectral people/ raking among the ash." But Hill's deliberate, mannered attacks on the present tense are often out of step with the political news he documents, as in the book's opening poem, "To the High Court of Parliament: November 1994":

> Where's probity in this—
> the slither-frisk
> to lordship of a kind
> as rats to a bird-table?
>
> England—now of genius
> the eidolon—
> unsubstantial yet voiding
> substance like quicklime:
>
> privatize to the dead
> her memory:
> let her wounds weep
> into the lens of oblivion.

It helps to know that, in November 1994, Tory MPs allegedly accepted money to ask questions in the House, and that Lady Porter "sold" a Westminster City Council graveyard for the nominal sum of one pound ("privatize to the dead / her memory"); but Hill's language is nonetheless ill-fitted to these petty, disconcerting events. Can today's Britain be convincingly figured as a kind of black hole, "unsubstantial yet voiding substance"? Hill's English nationalism appears to have grown braced and unyielding; minor scandals and historical tragedy are equally likely to provoke a kind of *hysterica passio* in his poems. "Mysticism and Democracy," for instance, closes with a vision of England taking her bow upon the world-stage "to hurled applause: the Veil of the Nations, the Final / Transformation-Scene-and-Curtain, Apocalypse-Hippodrome!"

If this is self-parody, it succeeds far too well. It is rarely fussy to insist on matters of style when reading political verse of this kind; only a sensitivity to the registers of feeling and expression can permit poetry to lay a claim upon the political. Hill has not yet found a lyric style that expresses the nuances of his beleaguered conservatism without the impression of vein-popping shrillness or an affectation of response. One may compare Larkin, who voiced a despairing conservative's concerns over the future of England in restrained, elegiac poems like "Going, Going":

> And that will be England gone,
> The shadows, the meadows, the lanes,
> The guildhalls, the carved choirs.
> There'll be books; it will linger on
> In galleries; but all that remains
> For us will be concrete and tyres.

Where Larkin took this decorum and understated manner from his fellow Movement writers and from the earlier, composed cadences of Hardy's verse, Hill subscribes to a hieratic, visionary nationalism that has its roots in Blake and, more recently, in Yeats. (That a prominent British poet should draw his nationalistic rhetoric from the great spokesman for Irish independence is one of the ironies of the contemporary poetic tradition.) And once again Hill's invocation of his predecessors causes problems. Yeats's "Blood and the Moon" serves as a source for the last poem in *Canaan*, called (like the book's opening lyric) "To the High Court of Parliament":

Ghazal

For James Tate

I am lying even now—I give you my word.
Kind of a picnic, an occupied shoe. My word!

My telegram arrives, no one's there to read it—
not even he who on tombs will bedew my word.

Danger invites rescue, we have a good thing going.
So let's break everything, please rescue my word.

The ghost said nothing that added to our knowledge.
Upon the candle, which lit itself, who blew my word?

I'm at home—betrothed to blue—with her refracted light.
The light is home, this blue is blue all through my word.

Hard to say who's winning. Nobody is winning.
Kansas City! Oriental art! Big Zoo! My word!

This erasure tilts words toward memory or tilts
against your word—at the tiny hour of two—my word.

Forgive me, please, could we be alone forever?
I have never been alone; I'll live to rue my word.

Our silence, Beloved Enemy, is not beyond
whatever love has done to your word, to my word.

Will the barbarians bring again their invisible language?
They were the solution, they foreknew my word.

Yours too, Shahid, will be a radical departure.
You'll go out of yourself and then into my word.

Agha Shahid Ali

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—who could outbalance poised
Marvell; balk the strength
of Gillray's unrelenting, unreconciling
mind;
grandees risen from scavenge;
to whom Milton
addressed his ideal censure:

This is an homage to Yeats's lines in praise of

Swift beating on his breast in sibylline
frenzy blind
Because the heart in his blood-sodden
breast had dragged
him down into mankind,
Goldsmith deliberately sipping at the
honey-pot of his mind,
And haughtier-headed Burke that proved
the State a tree....

Yeats's ecstatically prolonged lines, his hyperbole and virtuosic rhyming, were the marks of a vital poetry erecting an Irish pantheon to preside over his emerging nation's ideology. But when applied to Hill's Britain, this style seems exhausted, derivative. "Gillray's unrelenting, unreconciling mind" can only strike the ear as a hollowed-out echo of "Goldsmith deliberately sipping at the honey-pot of his mind." In each period, visionary nationalists need to discover their own rhetoric if they hope to renew the case for political prophecy and religious patriotism in verse.

One alternative to the visionary, public lyric is a poetry that meditates deeply upon the inner life. In some of the more refreshing moments of *Canaan*, Hill withdraws from the fiery political stance of "To the High Court of Parliament" and "Mysticism and Democracy" to explore the possibilities within spiritual autobiography. Bunyan, whose *Pilgrim's Progress* is the classic of this mode in English literature, serves as one of the quieter spirits presiding over Hill's collection. (Several short poems in *Canaan* are called "Dark Land," after the birthplace of Bunyan's character "Valiant-for-Truth.") But Hill has never been truly comfortable with the frank, searching candor of Bunyan or his modern-day secular counterparts, the confessional poets. In a lecture called "Poetry as 'Menace' and 'Atonement,'" Hill has said as much: "In taking poetry, and in particular modern poetry, as my own theme I shrink from any implication of special pleading, disdain the 'confessional mode' as currently practiced."

This anti-confessional poet has always preferred to write about the dead rather than about himself. To read through his *Collected Poems*, which appeared in 1992, is to tour a spectral lyric landscape populated by the shades of England's past. Even the lovely *Mercian Hymns* are evenly divided between a young boy's vivid, vibrant natural world and the ghost-world of an eighth-century English king. Hill's morbidity is partly rooted in his Puritanical aversion to poetry of the sensuous life, a deep religious horror of the flesh and its corruptibility:

...blindly
Among carnage the most delicate souls
Tup in their marriage-blood, gasping
"Jesus."

This passage from the early poem "Funeral Music" presents Hill at his coldest, degrading the sexual acts of generation that allow life to continue in the wake of war, atrocity, and genocide. But Hill finds a more humane expression of his funereal, otherworldly sensibility through the genre of elegy; and it is by writing elegies on the deaths of others that this poet begins to discover the self at the center of his ongoing spiritual autobiography.

Hill was the first to see this, in one of his early poems on the Holocaust, "September Song." In the middle of his address to the ghosts of Hitler's victims, the English poet pauses to confess his self-interest and his investment in writing for the dead:

Man the barbecues... not the barricades

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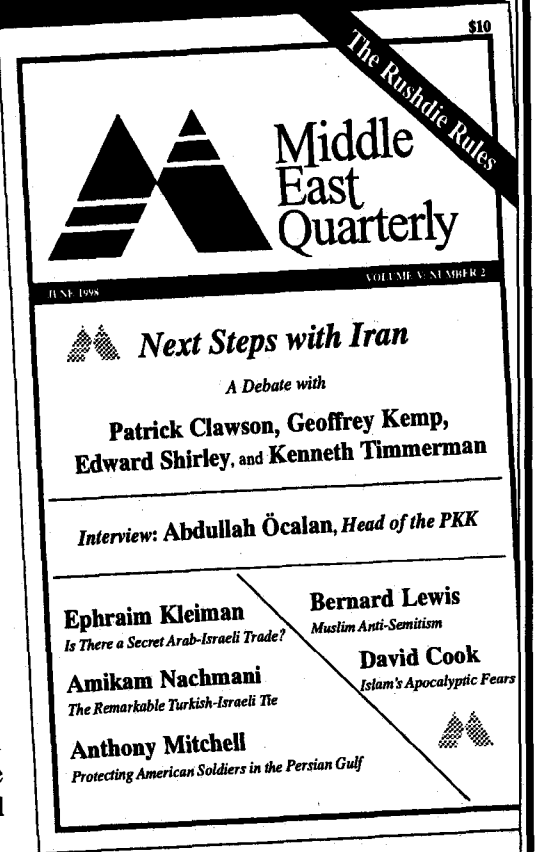

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(I have made
an elegy for myself it
is true)

To write an elegy is often, in a sense, to write for oneself. Unlike Czeslaw Milosz or Seamus Heaney—two poets who have memorably documented the trauma of losing loved ones to political violence—Hill's elegies are invariably for himself, regardless of their nominal subjects. This is at once the strength and the glaring problem for Hill's elegiac autobiography. It is hard to believe that the poem "To William Law: In Absentia" is motivated by true grief at the passing of a minor eighteenth-century opponent of theological rationalism:

Looking back, it is you I see stand
quiet, exact, under the tree of conviction—
image to mirage, mirage withdrawing
to skeined light,
light to the unmoved miraculous
pool of Siloam.

This is some of the strongest and most delicately realized writing in the book; but are Hill's eyes trained on William Law in this poem, or is the poet imagining his own passage from life? The most honest and convincing moments in *Canaan* arise when Hill comes closest to writing "self-elegies," in lyrics that register his own experience of aging and mortality. Here, the poet overcomes his earlier reliance upon elegiac surrogates for himself; and it is heartening to watch him abandon his affectations of despair in these direct confrontations with death. He has learned to face his own mortality in Yeatsian poems such as "De Anima," where "an / aphasia of staring wisdom" reveals "the souls [sic] images glassily exposed / fading to silverpoint." And in the striking final line of "Pisgah," Hill seems to discover that, in composing a supple, Virgilian elegy for his father, he has been writing about his own death all along:

I am ashamed and grieve, having seen you
then,
those many times, as now
you turn to speak
with someone standing deeper in the
shade;
or fork a row, or pace to the top end
where the steep garden overlooks the
house;
around you the cane loggias, tent-poles,
trellises,
the flitter of sweet-peas caught in their
strings,
the scarlet runners, blossom that seems to
burn
an incandescent aura towards evening.
This half-puzzled, awkward surprise is
yours;
you cannot hear me or quite make me out.
Formalities preserve us:
perhaps I too am a shade.

A handful of poems from *Canaan* succeed at this level; they are elegiac, introspective, quiet steps in a pilgrim's progress at the century's end. Yet far too often even elegy, the genre of the bereft and humbled soul, becomes a forum for Hill's political conservatism and apocalyptic historical imagination. His gentle poems to the aging self are hopelessly outnumbered. Hill has always felt a deep compulsion to address the horrors of history—one of his favorite words is "witness"—and in this book, self-elegy yields the floor to prolonged meditations on the deaths of men such as the Biafran writer Christopher Okigbo, the Russian Symbolist poet Aleksandr Blok, and Hans-Bernd von Haeften, a member of the Kreisau conspiracy to assassinate Hitler. Not surprisingly, these lyric sequences all buckle underneath their own ponderous historical weight.

Hill's stanzas on the execution of the Kreisau circle, for instance, shade too easily into the dogmatic utterance of Christian martyrology. Having grown up in the relative shelter of a small Worcestershire market town during the war, the poet can offer little more than moralizing abstractions on the martyrs' fates in "De Jure Belli Ac Pacis":

Evil is not good's absence but gravity's
everlasting bedrock and its fatal chains
inert, violent, the suffrage of our days.

While some might find it possible to agree with Hill's definition of evil, the language here will still feel rhetorical and contrived, more like the oratory of Spenser's Despair than Celan's humane search for the truths of the Holocaust. It takes a brave poet to face Nazi atrocity in verse; but it is disappointing to watch Hill talk around his chosen subject here, as he retreats behind a baroque screen of epigraph and allusion.

The historical imagination in *Canaan* also founders when Hill turns to the tragedy of Russian artists like Blok under Stalin. His "Scenes With Harlequins" features lyrical, polished moments, but these only arise when Osip Mandelstam can be heard echoing through this deeply British poet's lines:

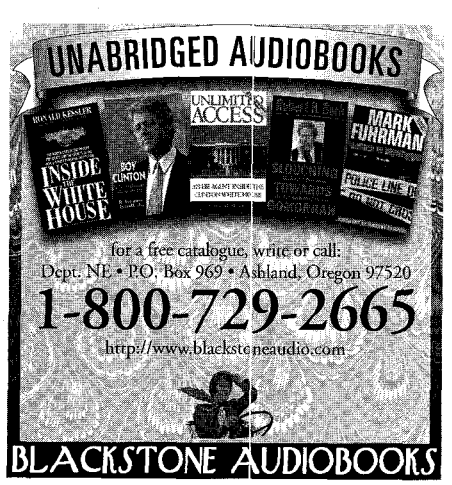
Even now one is amazed
by transience: how it
outlasts us all.
Motley of shadow

dabbles the earth,
the malachite-pocked
nymphs and sea-gods, the pear tree's
motionless wooden leaves.

The true heirs to Blok, Mandelstam, Akhmatova, and their fellow writers under Stalin are Eastern European writers such as Zbigniew Herbert and Adam Zagajewski; and for a contemporary British poet to write of Stalinism in turn-of-the-century Russian cadences is to ventriloquize others' suffering. There is an element of what Hugh Haughton once called "historical pastiche" in Hill's ransacking history for tragic episodes to buttress his bleak, melancholic vision of the millennium. It seems as if much of this poetry has been written from the reading room of a library. In his researches Hill may uncover plenty of reasons to bemoan this century; but the historical poems of *Canaan* lack the biting eloquence of felt despair.

Hill has never been a prolific poet. Over forty-five years of writing he has produced only six books of verse, and *Canaan* has been well over a decade in the making. Perhaps *Canaan* will have exhausted his appetite for historical pastiche, obscure reference, and political invective. In any case, he has shown flashes of a profound meditative mode along the way. The achievement of this book lies in the few modest, elegiac poems on the onset of old age—poems like "Pisgah" and "De Anima"—and not in its magisterial declarations of apocalyptic despair. It is possible that some day Hill will forge an ampler genre that can accommodate the hieratic, judicial aspects of his consciousness as well as an elegiac focus upon the self and its modest losses; but this seems unlikely. Still, by cultivating his talent for spiritual autobiography, Hill may go on to write some of our more thoughtful poems of old age.

SRIKANTH REDDY is a doctoral candidate in English at Harvard University.



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CORRESPONDENCE *continued from page 5*

payroll tax is coming into the program right now than previously expected due to the current strong economy. Although this extra money is being spent on other government programs, the trust fund is being credited with Treasury bonds. And the trustees estimate that down the road higher interest rates will generate considerably more income on these paper assets than previously thought.

But there's a problem. In 2013, when Social Security's annual expenditures begin to exceed its annual tax revenues, the government will have to start paying back first the interest and then the principal it is currently borrowing from the trust fund. At that point, there will be only three choices, none attractive: raise taxes, reduce government spending, or borrow approximately $7 trillion between 2013 and 2033. THE NEW REPUBLIC may view three additional years of this painful endgame as a reason to postpone dealing with Social Security next year, but Concord doesn't.

MARTHA PHILLIPS
Executive Director
The Concord Coalition
Washington, D.C.

Due credit

To the editors:

Joshua Wolf Shenk's article on bankruptcy reform ("Bankrupt Policy," May 18) correctly points out how the House reform bill still allows wealthy filers to take advantage of a few states' unlimited homestead exemptions, shielding their assets in luxury homes to evade creditors. However, it was wrong to credit a House staffer's assessment that addressing these abuses is "not politically feasible." In fact, a provision which I authored to cap the homestead exemption at $100,000 already has been adopted as an amendment to the Senate bankruptcy reform bill. A judiciary subcommittee passed this proposal unanimously. The Senate, which passed a similar cap in the last Congress, has made clear that "political" considerations will not stand in the way of this necessary reform.

HERB KOHL
United States Senator
Washington, D.C.

The editors welcome correspondence from readers. Letters should include the writer's full name, address, and telephone number; be typed double-spaced; and be held to under 200 words. Letters may be edited for space. Please address letters to: Correspondence, TNR, 1220 19th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. Letters may also be sent electronically to: TNR@aol.com

TRB *continued from page 6*

Next, the government would transfer those bonds into the Social Security trust fund. This infusion of funds, plus the interest it would bear, would cover a large chunk of Social Security's unfunded liabilities. The money we put aside today would help pay for future retirement.

Now, why would anybody oppose a nice idea like that? One reason I've heard is that it would forestall a needed overhaul of Social Security. But this is backwards. Adding the budget surpluses to the trust fund would reduce the amount of tax hikes or benefit cuts needed to save the program—making reform less painful and, therefore, politically easier. Objecting to it on these grounds would be like opposing a new cancer drug for fear that it would allow patients to skip chemotherapy. Reforming Social Security is a means to an end (making the program solvent), not an end in itself—unless you just want to cut the program for its own sake.

The second factor working against the plan is that Congress and the president have grown so fixated on balancing the budget that they cannot grasp the concept that the benefits of deficit reduction do not stop when the deficit reaches zero. My tireless harangues on this point in TNR's pages (and in its hallways, too, where my colleagues have learned to start sprinting in the opposite direction whenever I get started on this topic) have so far failed to dislodge both political parties from their obsession with a zero deficit. But I'll give it one more try: Every dollar spent paying down the debt is one more dollar available for private investment, no matter whether the deficit itself is positive, negative, or zero. If the government starts giving out tax cuts or spending now, when times are good, it will have to cut back more in the future. This is the opposite of good fiscal policy.

It's true that using the surplus to buy back debt carries one obvious political drawback: It spreads its benefits slowly and invisibly throughout the population, in the form of faster economic growth, rather than immediately helping a designated group of beneficiaries. Because the payoff is intangible to the public, Republicans act as though it's nonexistent; as Gingrich put it, "This surplus belongs to the American people and should be returned to the American people." The people! And who does he think would benefit from debt repayment?

JONATHAN CHAIT

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

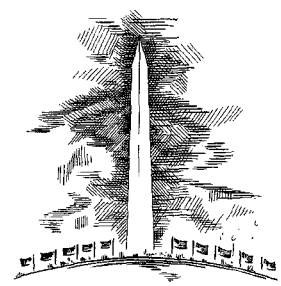
Guns 'n' Moses

THIS WEEK'S NEWS OF THE POLITically weird comes from www.jpfo.org. Log on to the Internet, point your Web browser to that address, and you'll come to the homepage of Jews for the Preservation of Firearms Ownership. JPFO's founder and executive director is Aaron Zelman of Wisconsin, who claims that gun control caused the Holocaust. Well, that's not quite right. Zelman believes gun control merely permitted the Holocaust to occur—because, if Hitler hadn't outlawed guns, armed Jews could have fought off one of the most powerful militaries in world history. Zelman's evidence consists, in part, of a JPFO study that shows how "'gun control' laws cleared the way for seven major genocides between 1915 and 1980, in which 56 million persons, including millions of children, were murdered." Zelman also claims that the U.S. government lifted language for its 1968 gun control laws from Nazi statutes.

ZELMAN REALIZES THAT HE'S IN a minority. Most American Jews seem to support gun control, and many took exception to his 1994 public relations campaign, in which he created billboards depicting Hitler, in the familiar Nazi salute, beside the caption, "All in favor of 'gun control' raise your right hand." But such criticism doesn't really worry Zelman. As he explains on his website, his Jewish adversaries—who include everyone from the Anti-Defamation League to Congressman Charles Schumer—are merely the products of a craven culture: "Because 'gun control' promotes victimization, and [Jews] glory in being victims, they promote 'gun control.'"

AS YOU MAY HAVE GUESSED, I AM not Aaron Zelman's kind of Jew. I have never touched a gun and have no desire to do so. And, while my father fired an M-16 twice while he was in the Army, I suspect he's not Aaron Zelman's kind of Jew, either. Dad was an Army doctor, drafted into service along with all the other young doctors of his era. His officer status was mostly symbolic (physicians automatically received commissions), and so was his basic training: just two half-day trips to the shooting range. Physicians were notoriously bad shots, and the trainers used to joke that they'd buy a beer for any doctor who actually landed a round on the target. Dad entered the Army more or less as a teetotaler, and he left that way, too, which tells you all you need to know about his marksmanship.

MY FATHER'S LIFE AS AN ARMY doctor lacked the comically miserable atmospherics of "M*A*S*H." The draft board took pity upon him—perhaps because he had a six-month-old (me) in tow—and dispatched him to Fort Devens, Massachusetts, just an hour west of Boston. I don't remember much of Fort Devens, but Dad tells me it was one of the happiest times of his life. There were no profit-minded insurance companies to second-guess his treatment decisions, and the Army really seemed to take the well-being of its patients seriously. Case in point: After my father violated standard operating procedure by expediting some discharge exams in order to get five infantrymen home by Christmas, the Army gave him an award for "superior achievement" and promoted him to major. This is not to say Army life was without disadvantages. For one thing, my father made a lot less money than he does now. But he's said that he'd gladly give up his surgeon's salary and let the government run things again if it meant he could go back to practicing medicine without having to meet an accountant's definition of profitability. Even allowing for his dewy-eyed nostalgia—and my admittedly generous impressions of him—I believe he's telling the truth.



NOWADAYS RHAPSODIZING ABOUT government-run health care the way my father does can get you branded a believer in socialized medicine. (Come to think of it, nowadays talking about even modest, market-based health care reforms can get you branded a believer in socialized medicine.) My father is no socialist, though. He's just a liberal, and an anachronistic one at that. Most of the liberals I know are interventionists who are contemptuous of the military itself. Not my father. He has great, romanticized admiration for the military; he also has a minor obsession with military vehicles—armored personnel carriers, fighter planes, and especially warships. His main hobby is building intricate models based on blueprints he culls from books and research libraries. But, strange though it may sound, my father hates violence and can't stand guns themselves. I can't even take him to bubble-gum cop movies like *Lethal Weapon*—too much shooting and gore, he tells me. Like I said, Dad just isn't Aaron Zelman's kind of Jew.

MY GREAT UNCLE BINYAMIN SIEgel on the other hand—now there's a Jew who would make Aaron Zelman proud. When Hitler invaded Poland in 1939, Benek—as they called him there—escaped to Russian-controlled territory, temporarily changed his Jewish last name, and joined the remnants of the Polish Army. Fighting with the Russians, he was wounded four times and received more than a dozen decorations—presumably for battling adversaries more threatening than strep throat and military red tape. In 1948, Benek emigrated to Israel, joined its army, and helped train the state's nascent police division. (*The Jerusalem Post* later called him a "near-legendary policeman.")

AARON ZELMAN IS fond of citing Israel in his tirades against gun control: "As in biblical times, Israeli Jews have enough faith in the A-mighty to take up weapons in self-defense." And it's true: Guns are much more a part of daily life in Israel than here in the U.S., in part because nearly everyone has military experience. But Zelman glosses over a few details, like the fact that Israelis must obtain permits for their firearms. To get the permits, they must demonstrate good mental health, go through gun-safety courses, and take target practice. Oh, and one more thing: Israel won't give a permit to anybody with a criminal record.

JPFO OPPOSES MOST GUN PERMIT laws. And, after the shooting in a Springfield, Oregon, high school on May 21, another pro-gun group cited a JPFO report in a press release titled, "Lesson of School Shootings: More Guns Needed at Schools." The release came from the Gun Owners of America, a group headed by Larry Pratt, who, as it happens, has a longstanding relationship with Zelman. When Pratt took a leave of absence from Pat Buchanan's 1996 presidential campaign amid charges of anti-Semitism, Zelman defended his fellow gun enthusiast as a "righteous gentile." (Pratt, for his part, called the anti-Semitism charges "outrageously false.") It was quite a statement on Zelman's part—after all, Pratt had appeared at rallies alongside supremacist groups that portray gun control as the work of conspiring Jewish lawmakers. Maybe Uncle Benek really isn't Aaron Zelman's kind of Jew after all.

JONATHAN COHN

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Where We Stand

A commentary on public education and other critical issues

The Big Lie

By SANDRA FELDMAN, President
American Federation of Teachers

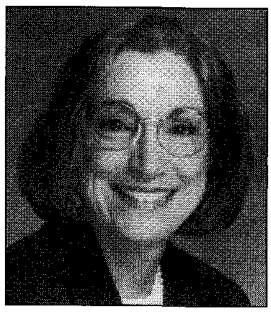
There's a big lie being circulated that teacher unions are the main obstacle to education reform. This is nonsense. The people responsible for this lie don't care about evidence—in fact, evidence gets in the way of their anti-public-schools agenda. So the public needs to know that teachers and the unions they elect to represent them are working hard to make every American school a place where students can work and learn and parents can gladly send their children. But we can't do it alone. No matter how "powerful" we are, we need partners—parents, superintendents, school boards, and others.

This is not mere rhetoric. For example, teacher unions all over the country are moving front and center to help fix failing schools. A while back, I wrote a column about how the New York City teacher union helped to turn around a Harlem school that everyone had given up on. And just the other day, Randi Weingarten, the new union president, offered to jointly operate, with the board of education, a troubled New York City school. There is nothing surprising about the prescription in these cases—but it is powerful. It includes high academic standards; proven, research-based programs; smaller classes; special help for students who are falling behind; and professional development for teachers.

Good Medicine

And the prescription is not limited to New York City; it's being used to good effect all over the country: in Los Angeles, Boston, Philadelphia, Dade and Broward Counties, Hartford, Corpus Christi. It's even making a difference in Washington, D.C., where a new superintendent and the union are sitting down together to work on bringing standards, accountability, and order to schools that have a national reputation for low achievement.

Although those spreading the big lie make a lot of noise, we're not the only ones who say that unions are getting it right. A couple of weeks ago, at a meeting of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, I heard Mayor Richard Daley of Chicago and Mayor Thomas Menino of Boston talk about education reform efforts in their cities. Now, Chicago and Boston schools have had serious problems, but with the help of mayors who are committed to education reform, these schools are coming back. Both Daley and Menino went out of their way to praise teacher unions for the important role they are playing in education reform. Obstacles to reform? Daley and Menino scoffed at this idea. Indeed, they called teacher unions "partners" in their reform efforts. And Richard Riordan, the Republican mayor of Los Angeles, also says that he works well with the local teacher union.



Teacher unions are moving front and center to help fix failing schools.

When you look at it, teacher unions have taken on plenty of tough educational challenges. We were early leaders in the push for national standards and especially for higher academic standards for all our students. We've mounted strong opposition to social promotion—the practice of just sending students on to the next grade regardless of whether they have learned the current year's work. And because, as teachers, we know that children cannot learn unless the classroom and the school are orderly places, we've also campaigned long and hard for tougher discipline codes that are consistently and fairly enforced.

Teacher Quality

Nor have we shirked the difficult issue of teacher quality. The union recognizes that we owe it to our students—and our profession—to make sure that new and veteran (and, yes, even tenured) teachers who are not doing well in the classroom are identified and helped and, if necessary, counseled out of teaching. Peer review and intervention programs include the pioneer Toledo program and programs in Minneapolis; Pittsburgh; New York City; Rochester, New York; Cincinnati, Columbus, and Berea, Ohio; and Poway, California—with more coming all the time. We've also collaborated on procedures to streamline the process for firing teachers who should not be teaching our students.

These are the kinds of things teachers want to concentrate on—and that goes for both AFT and NEA members. If our two organizations become one—and the merger process could begin this summer—we expect to spend most of our time working on improving public education. But we still won't be able to do it alone. We'll need superintendents and school boards, parents and other interested citizens to come forward, sit down with us, and put their passion and wisdom to work in the fight to make all our schools what they should be. ■

***Where We Stand* is published once every month in *The New Republic*. To comment, write to Sandra Feldman, AFT, 555 New Jersey Ave. N.W., Washington, DC 20001.** **© Sandra Feldman 1998.** **Visit our web site (http://www.aft.org).**

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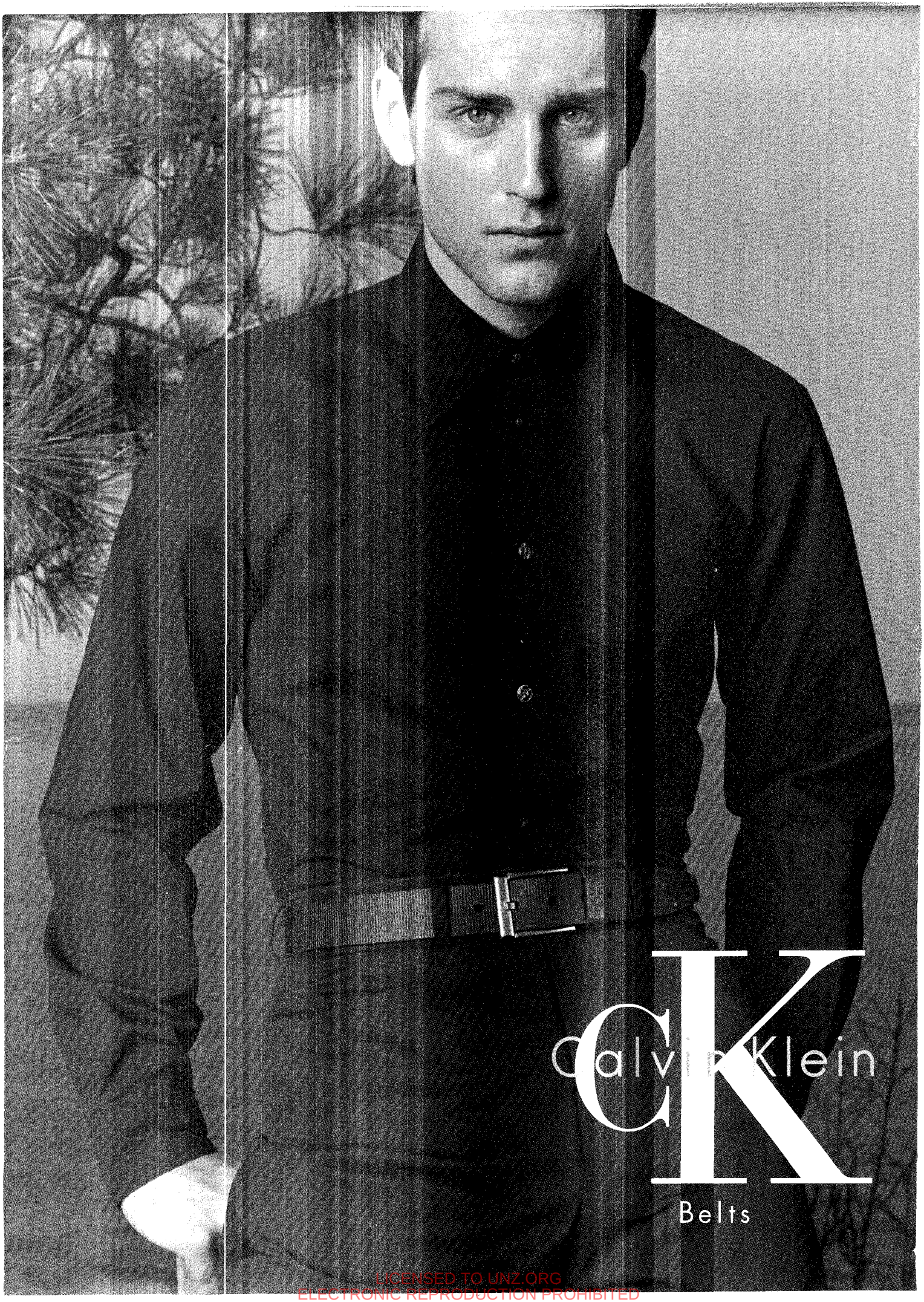

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